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무한경쟁

INFINITE COMPETITIVE DUNGEON SOCIETY

BOOK 02

Toika

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Infinite Competitive Dungeon Society

(무한경쟁던전사회)

by

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Synopsis

The second moon marked the beginning of a revolutionary change.

With the emergence of monsters and dungeons in modern society, and the ability users who fights against them, the world faces a shift in its paradigm.

It heralds the advent of a new energy source and the decline of traditional occupations.

Common sense thus becomes uncommon sense, and imagination becomes reality.

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Chapter 101. Granting Freedom (8)

The hunt was over. At least for the next six months, this Field Dungeon would no longer be dangerous. Although it was only temporary, Windermere had regained its peace.

From what I heard, the tourism would reopen as well. As A rank or higher Awakened had to continue observing the lake, the tourists would go along with them. However, in a situation of life and death, the tourists' lives wouldn't be guaranteed.

With such danger, I doubted whether any tourists would come. However, the moment people found out that the Field Dungeon had been cleared, tourists flocked to the area. Amazing, Windermere. In a way, it made sense. Supposedly, running into a monster once a dungeon was cleared was the same chance as being hit by lightning while walking in the rain.

“Hwaya, what are you doing?”

On the night we cleared the dungeon, I visited Hwaya as usual to teach her how to control mana, and saw Hwaya packing her belongings into boxes.

“Isn't it obvious? Since we cleared the dungeon, there's no reason for me to stay here.”

“Oh, right. Did you get the permission?”

“Of course. I ended the negotiation with the government myself. Thanks, Shin. You’re the reason I could regain my freedom.”

“Freedom, you say... It’s thanks to me?”

I asked with a grin.

“Yep. We could clear the Field Dungeon thanks to you, and you even found Brightman’s wrongdoing. I can return to Korea because of it. The info on Brightman was especially useful in the negotiation.”

It seemed she complained and revealed everything about Brightman’s misconduct. Brightman had punched a famous ranker (though it’s embarrassing, that was me) that Hwaya invited for aid, and put him in a life-threatening situation. Hwaya was incredibly angry at the time. It was the same for her party’s S rankers, although the other countries’ S rankers only turned a blind eye as Brightman had likely paid them off.

Brightman himself had made a ridiculous excuse, that he thought he was being attacked and acted in self-defense. Hwaya’s anger had reached its limit at that point, but I calmed her down. Nothing good would come out from Britain’s strongest rankers fighting. More importantly, I couldn’t let her take my revenge away. Brightman smiled, and so did I.

In any case, with this incident, Hwaya could easily detach herself from Brightman and the British government protecting him.

Although the incident had not become public because of the British government's desperate beseechment, but with my approval, Hwaya used the incident to put heavy pressure on the British government. She said that a friend she specially requested to help had suffered a humiliation from Brightman that couldn't be washed away, and that she had no plans to step a foot in Britain unless it was a national crisis. In other words, just as Hwaya had warned them before, Britain had lost Hwaya in exchange for Brightman. No matter how I thought about it, Brightman's actions were incredibly foolish. I wondered how an idiot who was blinded by his desire for a woman could rise to such a position.

“Are you coming to Korea?”

“Yep. I was planning on going to Korea anyways when I was done. Mom said she'd rather die than come to Britain. I think she wants me to come live with her in Korea. I was originally going to try convincing her again, but... with what happened this time, I really didn't want to stay in the same country as Brightman. If it's him, he would come visit me no matter where I was in Britain. ... Do you not want me to go to Korea?”

Hwaya complained, then asked after a bit of hesitation. Her cheeks had turned red just like her hair.

“Not at all. We can meet more often too. I'm glad.”

“... Right. We could. Kuhum.”

Hwaya looked away and let out a dry cough. Did she breathe the

wrong way? I got up with a grin.

“You must be busy with all the packing, so I’ll go back for today. Ah, don’t forget to give me the melting tuna later.”

“You’ll save some for me, right?”

“Of course. You can eat to your heart’s content. Grilled, sashimi, stewed, steamed, I’ll give you the full course.”

“Good, excellent.”

We made an expression of camaraderie and gave each other a thumbs up. The melting tuna I was talking about was none other than the giant melting tuna I killed! Hwaya put it in her inventory, using the ridiculous extradimensional storage magic excuse, and said that she’d give it to me later. In exchange for her performance in front of the others, I promised her an unlimited refill on melting tuna dishes. In truth, I didn’t know how long it would take me to finish such a giant melting tuna, so I was glad Hwaya was there to help.

“Ah, by the way, Hwaya.”

“Yeah?”

“Where can I get a good apple pie around here?”

“Apple pie...?”

Although Hwaya tilted her head, she still gave me an answer. I thanked her and left her lodging. I then went to the place Hwaya told me about to buy an apple pie. Because of the enticing smell, I ended up buying two apple pies, one of them for the obvious reason and the other to share with Yua when I got back home. Then, I summoned my elementals and circulated Peruta Circuit, waiting for dawn.

Once the night had passed, I could enter the dungeon again. There were things to take care of, a person to find and questions to ask. I also had to stick my spear in the damned reaper’s face as a reunion gift.

Then, a little before dawn, when no one was around, I went on the lake using Ruyue’s power. Just by freezing the area of the water I was stepping on, I felt a strange sense of omnipotence. Lady of the Lake had finally blessed me!

“I brought the apple pie~.”

After walking deep into the lake, I shouted in a rather loud voice. Although I felt like I was being stupid, but I couldn’t help it.

“I said I brought apple pie—!”

[Show me!]

“Uwoah!”

A girl’s face suddenly appeared above the surface. I almost fell underwater from being startled, but Ruyue saved me by instantly freezing the water around me. I thanked Ruyue, and since I was lying on the ice anyways, I observed the girl’s face. Simply put, she had a unrealistic appearance.

Her sky blue hair, half submerged underwater, was shining as if the entire thing was an LED light, and it was the same for her blue eyes staring at me. She looked like a beautiful woman in other areas, but I was surprised by how mature her face looked. I had expected her to be a young girl.

[Hurry up, show me!]

“Ah, here.”

I took out the apple pie from my inventory. The woman then made happy exclamations and crawled up onto the ice. Although I thought she wasn’t wearing anything, she actually had a translucent light blue dress, which stuck to her body tightly. Although her slender, yet bountiful, figure was in full-view, because I had seen Hwaya’s voluptuous figure for about a week, I could act aloof.

[Apple pie! It’s really apple pie!]

“Yeah, it is.”

[Can I eat it? Can I eat it?]

“You don’t have to ask twice. There’s only one for you anyways.”

[Yay!]

Her long, slender fingers reached forward and took the apple pie whole. Feeling the coldness of her skin for an instant, I was reminded once again that she wasn’t human. It was then that she took out a slice of apple pie and handed it to me. She blinked her eyes, glimmering with shining particles of light, looking unrealistically cute.

[Here.]

“Thanks.”

[Thanks for the meal!]

When I accepted the slice she offered, she took the rest of the apple pie and took a bite. Then, the light in her eyes gathered and made a clear star shape. I was truly surprised. She was showing her non-human side too much! So she could control those shining particles!?

[Delicious! So delicious! Delicious, delicious!]

“Y-Yeah, eat lots.”

[Yeah!]

She munched on the pie, making me wonder just where it was going in her slender body. The pie was gone in the blink of an eye, and she stared at the apple pie in my hand with longing eyes. The particles of light in her eyes were repeatedly scattering and regathering.

“Do you want it?”

[Wooooow!]

As if she was waiting for me to say it, she snatched the slice of apple pie and ate it. After that, she made a satisfied expression and lay down on the ice.

[Thanks! I'll forgive you for hurting me!]

“Yeah, thanks.”

[I like you now!]

Ye-Eun, be happy. There's someone similar to you here. But I got her heart with just a single apple pie. The difficulty was lower than even Ye-Eun! I thought about all the fries I had to feed Ye-Eun before she said she liked me. Ah, not that I was doing it so I could

hear that. Really.

“Y-Yeah. If... If you don’t bother other people anymore, I’ll like you too.”

Although I couldn’t be completely sure, she seemed different than the other bosses who showed clear hostility towards humans. She really just wanted to let them listen to her singing.

Not knowing the danger of her own actions was foolish and it was annoying that she chose to appear during the boss fight, but since she hadn’t killed anyone yet, it wasn’t too late. She could still be redeemed. Her following words served as proof.

[But I never bullied anyone! Besides telling me to kill you, everyone said I could just sing like I wanted! I don’t bully anyone that doesn’t bully me first!]

“Right, right, but who’s the one that told you to kill me?”

[I don’t know, I can’t remember! I forgot when I came here!]

“... Do you know why you were told to kill me?”

[Because you’re a Hero! That’s all I know! But I won’t kill you. I won’t bully other people either!]

She was told to kill me... because I was a Hero. I suddenly felt

chills, but nodded my head regardless. Then, I answered her question.

“But you see, people are bothered by your singing.”

[Why? Is my singing that bad?]

“The problem is that it’s too good. It infatuates people because of it.”

[Is that bad?]

“If people become infatuated by your singing and lose their consciousness, they’ll fall into the water. What would happen after that?”

[Wouldn’t they come play with me underwater?]

“They’d die.”

[They’d die!?!]

“Yep.”

At my words, she became noticeably sad. The particles in her eyes also spiraled around in shock.

[I hate killing, but everyone else tries to kill people. I'm scared. He said I was special, but he didn't try to understand me.]

“Special, huh... Since you hate killing people, you are indeed a special monster. But who is this person you're talking about?”

[I don't know, I forgot!]

Huu, there's really nothing I can find out... I wanted to tell her how she almost killed people out of anger, but I held myself back. However, she seemed to be angry from what I just said.

[Also, I'm not something like a monster!]

“Ah, sorry. Then what should I call you?”

[I'm me.]

“You don't have a name?”

[What's that?]

“It's a mark that defines you. It's a way to separate you from everything else in this world. Something that can prove that you are you.”

[Wow.]

Huu, it really was like teaching a child. In truth, I hadn't planned on talking to her so leisurely... Although I didn't get the information I wanted, I couldn't chase her away, so I decided to stick with her for a while longer.

[Then you can give me a name.]

“I can?”

[Yeah! If it's you, it's okay.]

For a moment, I hesitated. However, when I saw her innocent eyes, a word flashed across my mind. Since it wasn't a fitting name for a girl, I took off the front of it.

“Plene.”

[Waaa, pretty! Is that my name? Yay!]

She seemed to like the name I gave her, as she raised her hands and jumped. At that moment, messages I never expected rang out.

[You made an achievement of taming the A+ rank boss monster 'siren.' You obtained 1 skill point. Current skill points: 16]

[You can obtain the subclass 'Tamer.' However, you must give up your current subclass 'Skill Collector' to obtain a new subclass. If you give up the Skill Collector subclass, you will no longer be able to use the Collector's Pocket Watch. Would you like to change your subclass?]

[If you do not obtain the Tamer subclass, you will not be able to use your tamed monster in Event Dungeons or the normal dungeon. However, you will not need to give up your tamed monster, and it can accompany you in Field Dungeons.]

Author's Note:

I'll say it now. Siren Plene isn't a harem member. She's just a slightly important support character! I mean, ICDS isn't harem in the first place!

PS – Lady of the Lake Blessing: Fate/Zero animation's Saber servant reference. (truly a short explanation!)

Chapter 102. Those That Climb The Dungeon

(1)

“What’s this...?”

I had already heard about taming before. In games, it referred to domesticating hostile monsters with food or training them to become one’s allies. However, I didn’t think a Tamer subclass would appear like this! Just by naming a monster, I could make it my ally? No, that probably wasn’t it.

I shook my head at the words asking if I wanted to change my subclass. The Skill Collector subclass was a huge part of my strength. No matter how strong Plene was, she couldn’t replace it. Not to mention, it seemed I could always change my decision. Though, I didn’t think I would ever change to the Tamer subclass...

After looking through the messages, I looked at Plene, who was rubbing her head against my shoulder with a smile.

[Thanks for the pretty name! You gave me an apple pie and a name! I like you!]

She was being completely submissive. I patted her head as a test, and she showed her happiness by making her eyes into star shapes. Easy, she was too easy...! If a bad oppa became your master, bad things would have happened!

“Plene.”

[Yeah!]

“It looks like I became your master.”

[What’s a master? I like you!]

“ ... ”

With that, she hugged me directly. Feeling the cold, soft, and squishy sensation (the ice below me began to fissure with cracking noises), I sat blankly, then remembered I had things to do. In fact, there was something I had to ask Plene.

“Plene, you said you didn’t want to kill humans, right?”

[Yeah! I hate monsters more than humans! They only want to eat, and they even tried to eat me! But... I also want to sing.]

“Then... do you want to come with me to find a way to do that?”

[Okay! I like you, so I’ll follow you!]

“Y-Yeah.”

Damn... I didn’t think someone stronger than Ruyue would

appear! Plus, although Plene had an unrealistic appearance, she still looked human. I couldn't help but react as a man. Snap out of it, Kang Shin! No matter how cute and pretty she is, she's a monster! Don't forget it!

Crack. The ice split into two right down the middle of my stretched out legs. The ice then began to drift apart, splitting my legs along with it.

“R-Ruyue!?”

[Shin... Meanie...]

“Not now! I'll play with you as much as you want later!”

From then, it took a considerable time before I could make it to the dungeon's Residential Area.

“So you tamed a siren, Shin-nim. This is the first time I've heard anyone taming a siren. Kuk, as I thought, a man that I find charming will also be like that to other women...!”

Loretta made a displeased expression as she stared at Plene who stuck was to me like glue. If I thought more about why Loretta was feeling unhappy, I felt like I would be in serious trouble, so I quickly changed the subject.

“Plene said she wants to sing without killing people. Is there a place like that in the dungeon's Residential Area?”

“Of course. There’s the recreational area. You should already have the qualification to enter it, Shin-nim.”

“Ah, yeah. I also got a life-time free voucher for a place called ‘Resting Place of Angels’ for the first achievement, uhuk!?”

The moment I brought up Resting Place of Angels, Loretta’s eyes sparkled, pushing Plene aside and grabbing my hands. After being thrown on the floor, Plene blinked her large, clear eyes, unsure of what had just happened, then began to tear up.

“Shin-nim, go there with me! Now!”

“Can you let go of me first, Loretta? I want to pick Plene up before she cries.”

“If you go there, you can probably find what this shallow and arrogant siren wants.”

[I’m not shallow or arrogant! I don’t even know what that means!]

From what I heard, Resting Place of Angels was a resort. The so-called recreational area was similar to the Residential Area’s residences. Unlike the residences, however, it was a place purely for the purpose of recovering the fatigue built up from exploring the dungeon and letting dungeon explorers relax freely. It was truly like a resort in real life. Apparently, anyone from the guild of

the resort's master could enter, and other than them, one person could enter as long as that person was accompanied by the master.

Explorers could go there by making achievements or completing special quests. Like the mansions and the houses, the area they could go changed depending on the scope of the achievement and the difficulty of the quest. There was an even trickier condition. Only those that owned a residence, had a room in a tenement house, or were a member of a guild could go to the resorts.

Furthermore, Resting Place of Angels was one of the few Special Resorts. Unlike the other resorts, which explorers had to share, it was bound to one specific explorer. If a guild master owned a Special Resort, the guild members could enter the Special Resort with the guild master's permission. Because it was called life-time free voucher, I thought it was for something like a waterpark, but it seemed it was even more generous.

“Then, can Loretta come with me?”

“The person accompanying Shin-nim can even be an outsider.”

“What about Plene?”

[I'm going, I'm going!]

“That siren is Shin-nim's servant so of course she can go with you.”

Without having to visit Meladel, Loretta exchanged the Resting Place of Angels voucher for a key. Thinking, ‘so it’s another key,’ I received it with a bitter smile. Then, just like how I opened the path to my mansion, I used the key with familiarity. When I used the Resting Place of Angels’ key with Loretta and Plene standing next to me, the surrounding scenery melted and a new scenery appeared. High, blue sky, warm sunlight, a sandy beach, crystal clear ocean, and fairly big birds flying above it. Behind me, I saw trees with all sorts of fruits hanging from them and a big seaside villa.

“... This is an island, right? It’s the picturesque uninhabited island.”

“Yes, it’s indeed an island!”

[Uninhabited island!]

When Loretta spread her arms out and shouted excitedly, Plene also imitated her and shouted. I doubt she knew what uninhabited island meant. I mean, just what was that sun? I knew the dungeon was full of mysterious things, but this was...

“To think I would come to the Resting Place of Angels... Do you know why this place is called that?”

“Tell me.”

“Because people staying here can relax without a worry in the

world, like angels! The ocean, the sandy beach, the fruit trees with all sorts of different fruits, and this villa!”

“I can’t help but think it has everything a resort should have.”

“There’s even an hot spring deeper into the island. That’s not all! It even has dense forests, valleys, and springs!”

[Hot spring! I want to go to the hot spring! I like hot springs!]

I didn’t know how this island could have so many different areas, but I understood that this Resting Place of Angels was an amazing place. I also didn’t know how Plene could like hot springs.

“So? Why did I need to bring Plene here?”

“If it’s here, there are no humans who would be affected by the siren’s singing. She’ll have an audience as well.”

“Audience?”

[Lalala~]

Plene suddenly began to sing. Her voice was truly beautiful, and as I had tamed her, it didn’t seem to have any effect on me. I glanced at Loretta. She had closed her eyes and was enjoying Plene’s voice.

Soon, the audience Loretta talked about began to appear. Large birds from the sky, dolphins and fish from the ocean, and animals from the inner area of the island. They were gathering here slowly.

“No way...”

[Lalala~ Lalala~]

As Plene sang, the animals approached slowly, responding to her singing with quiet cries. Their eyes were clear and their minds did not look like they were affected by Plene’s singing. Loretta opened her eyes, and seeing my surprised expression, smiled lightly.

“It’s a good thing. No one has been here for a long time, so everyone has been lonely. Shin-nim luckily found a siren who is extremely good at singing. Her singing will be an excellent gift for them.”

“Who’s ‘them’...?”

I felt a hint of sadness from Loretta’s words and patted the small and cute wolf that walked up to me. Loretta then smiled sweetly and replied.

“Of course, they’re the emergency food supply for when we’re hungry. They all look delicious, right?”

“...”

I wanted her to let my dream stay a dream...! How mean!

Plene really liked the Resting Place of Angels and decided to stay here unless I needed her. Here, she would be able to play and sing to her heart's content. There were also no monsters which she hated. It was the ideal place she hoped for.

However, there seemed to be one thing she didn't like. It was that I wouldn't be there.

[You have to come visit me often! Otherwise, I'll go find you!]

"I'll visit often, so don't worry."

[Okay! I'll wait with the new friends I made!]

After promising Plene multiple times, she nodded her head as if she finally believed me. She then walked up to me and kissed my cheek. I was startled, but I thought back to the kisses Yua gave me and tried to calm myself down. Of course, it wasn't so easy.

Next to me, Loretta was shaking with her fists clenched.

"Obliterating Third..."

"Loretta!?"

In any case, with that, I took care of the matter with Plene. After saying my goodbye to her, Loretta and I returned to Fairy Garden. Opening the door to her log cabin, Loretta made an offer.

“Shin-nim, stay for a cup of tea.”

“Sure. There’s something I have to ask Loretta too.”

“Huhu, come in!”

The tea Loretta brewed looked normal, but was incredibly tasty and fragrant. However, I couldn’t be drunk on the taste of tea today. The reason I took care of Plene’s matter was for this moment. Today, I couldn’t just enjoy my time with Loretta.

I took a sip of tea, then slowly placed the teacup down and asked her.

“Loretta.”

“Yes, Shin-nim.”

With a small sigh, I asked her straightforwardly.

“What is a Hero?”

“ ... ”

Loretta's smile became stiff. However, that only lasted for a moment, as she continued with a warm smile.

“Shin-nim already knows, right? There is only one such being in a world! They're amazing, and everyone respects them!”

“Loretta.”

I called her name with a low voice. She flinched then froze, but I continued without paying it any attention.

“When I met Plene for the first time, she said she was ordered to kill the Hero... Am I someone that must die?”

“I-It's... the opposite! You're someone who isn't allowed to die! Never! Don't even say something so horrible! No! I-If you die, I! I!”

“Thanks for worrying about me, but that's not what I'm talking about. Am I someone that 'must die' to the monsters that are invading Earth?”

“ ... ”

A cold silence flowed, and Loretta dodged my glance with her mouth shut. Just that was enough of an answer for me. ...An empty laugh came out.

What was this? I had to die because I was a Hero? The monsters that appeared on Earth, or rather, its high-ranking monsters, were trying to kill me. I was their first priority. It was just that no one knew about it because it hadn't been long since monsters began to appear on Earth. If more time passed, monsters that actively sought me out might appear. But how had I acted until now, hearing that I was the Hero?

I became conceited, thinking everyone was just raising me up. Even while I told them not to call me a Hero, I enjoyed it inwardly. I even named the skill I liked the most after it. Even while I looked down on the explorers who credited my strength to being a Hero, I was relieved that I was one. I might have even thought I was glad to have been born as the Hero. But what? Heroes are the first targets that monsters aim for? They had to kill me? There was no comedy like it. How much did the other explorers sneer seeing me? Praising me on the outside, while thinking how clueless I was.

To calm down my beating heart, I began to circulate Peruta Circuit. Trying to stay calm, I asked Loretta again.

“Loretta, just what am I? What exactly is a Hero?”

Loretta didn't say anything. Trying to stop myself from getting impatient, I asked again.

“Please, Loretta, I want to know. I should know. Or, do you also plan on leaving me to be clueless? You've shown me respect and did your best for me. I at least thought I had a special relationship

with Loretta. Was I wrong? Did you just...”

“Stop.”

She spoke with a trembling voice. She raised her teacup and gulped down the hot tea all at once. As she had moist eyes that seemed ready to burst into tears at any time, I was startled.

“Shin-nim, do you have to hear it now?”

“Loretta?”

“As you might already know, I don’t really want to tell you right now. Once you hear the answer, you’ll change without a doubt, and if you do, I will change as well. I don’t like that. I want us to stay the way we are. For even a little while longer, I want to enjoy my carefree daily life with you. Am I being too greedy? Shin-nim, can you give me a little more time? You still have time to spare. The time hasn’t come yet. So please, until then...!”

“Loretta...”

The words didn’t come out. I felt like I had been punched in the most unexpected spot. Although my mouth was open, I couldn’t say anything. Then, with a slightly cracking voice, I replied barely.

“I’ll... wait. So... when the time comes, you have to... tell me.”

“Thank you, Shin-nim.”

Loretta wiped the tears around her eyes, and made a clumsy smile. I almost lost myself in her feminine and extremely beautiful appearance, but I held on, thinking about what she just said. Then like a fool, I asked.

“If I change... Loretta will change too?”

“Huhu, it’s not like you don’t understand, right?”

“I, no, well, that’s...”

I didn’t think I would say something so stupid. Seeing me stutter without knowing what to say, Loretta made a small smile and said in a voice that just barely reached my ears.

“Coward.”

“Uk.”

I became silent, unable to make any excuses. I felt dizzy. As it seemed so absurd, I thought I was dreaming, but when I pinched my thigh in secret, the pain was vivid. No, she even found out I pinched myself. I wanted to die. I really wanted to die.

Loretta again spoke in a whispering voice.

“I’ll also give you time.”

“... Thanks.”

“You have to give me a proper reply, okay? Of course, I’ll only acknowledge one answer.”

With that, she once again smiled. Even while I was in a daze from her fragrance and beauty, her smile was ingrained in my head clearly. I had to accept it. To a certain extent, my heart was already stolen by her.

Author’s note:

8,000 characters. I thought about writing 2,000 characters and splitting the chapter into two, but just stopping at the 8,000 mark seemed to be the best option.

The little bit of the secret of the Hero has been revealed. Some people have already guessed, but not saying any more will be our promise!

Also, the relationship between Loretta and Shin has taken a step forward. What will Shin do? Will he forget about Ye-Eun and choose Loretta? Not even the author (me) knows. Look forward to the future development ^^

Chapter 103. Those That Climb The Dungeon

(2)

I decided to return to Korea once Hwaya had already left Windermere for Korea. Of course, it only took me an instant. I called Walker from the dungeon, grabbed him, and shouted Return. That was it.

“H-Hm? What was that? What did you do?”

“That’s a secret of course.”

Just like that, I was home with Walker. Because I appeared in the living room with a foreigner, my family, who were gathered at the living room, suddenly froze.

“Oppa!”

“Hey, oppa’s back.”

Yua quickly jumped into my embrace. I patted her and gave Walker the glance, ‘you’re going to be guarding her.’

“I’m back.”

“Yeah, you were on TV, so I thought you’d come back soon.”

Father pointed at the TV. On the screen was a platinum blonde, red-eyed man wearing a mask having an interview with the Windermere Lake as the background. They wanted me to do a quick interview as someone who had a major hand in clearing the Field Dungeon, but I didn't think the interview would even air in Korea.

“Oppa looked really cool!”

“Thanks, although it's not my real appearance.”

On TV, people were speculating from Thunder Knight's appearance that he was a mix between Western and Eastern. Seeing the newscaster clearly speaking about how I could even be Korean from my relationship with Hwaya, I felt slightly irritated.

“So who's that young man?”

“Walker, this is my family. Introduce yourself, but keep it short.”

As Walker didn't know how to speak Korean, he introduced himself in English. However, as my family knew English to a certain extent like most Koreans, they didn't have too much trouble understanding him. In fact, since father had traveled often around the globe for training, he knew basic conversation level words in many languages.

“It's dangerous these days, so I hired him to be Yua's bodyguard. Ah, he won't be living with us or anything like that.”

“There’s no bodyguard for your mother?”

“Mother doesn’t go out that much. If you’re in danger, you can always call father or me.”

“Huu, dear, look at our son ignoring his mother and only taking care of his sister.”

“When you go out, you can just take me along. Anyways, bodyguard, huh... How did Walker, who is a dungeon explorer, end up being a bodyguard?”

I winked at father and told him that I’d explain it later over private dungeon explorer message. Then, I patted Yua, who had calmed down a lot by now, two more times and separated myself from her. Then, I returned Ghostface back to Walker.

“Let’s go Walker. We have to get you an identity and a place to live.”

“It sure became easy. Just by being an Awakened, countries will give you an identity. It’s something unthinkable in the past. I still clearly remember people being deported as illegal aliens.”

“It just goes to show you how dangerous the world is now. Having one more ability user to fight against monsters is more important than petty things like that.”

When I was about to leave the house, Yua stopped me. With a radiant smile, she offered a hand to Walker.

“To be honest, I don’t think I need a bodyguard, but take good care of me. I’m Kang Yua.”

“Hm, right, I’m Edward Walker.”

They shook hands lightly. After their short greeting, Walker and I left the house. Walker then equipped Ghostface, changing his appearance into a man I had not seen before.

“By the way, boss.”

“Boss?”

“Aren’t you?”

“We’re equal in the contract, so just call me by my name.”

“You clearly have a collar on my neck, but... Fine. Kang Shin.”

“Yeah.”

“Your sister is innocent and kind, unlike you whose insides are black and violent. Are you guys from different parents?”

“If you fall for her, I’ll kill you.”

His answer shocked me.

“Please, she’s half my age... It’s not like I’m a pedophile.”

“Half!? How old are you!?”

“I’m 36 this year.”

How does he look so young...!?

“Brightman was 37, right?”

“Right. That’s why I’ve been his toy since he was young. Just thinking about it makes me mad.”

“Brightman also only looked like he was in his late 20s, but you’re even worse. I thought you were in early to mid 20s for sure.”

“... Your stare is making me uncomfortable.’

“Why aren’t you married? Did Brightman not allow you to?”

“I just didn’t have the opportunity.”

“Ah, I see. You just didn’t have the opportunity.”

“That way of talking is extremely unpleasant...”

“What? Why? You just didn’t have the opportunity.”

“Ku... I want to kill you, but just thinking about it makes my head hurt...!”

Walker half-assed the ability assessment and got a B rank. If he made good use of his equipment and stealth ability, I thought he could even be A+ rank. Of course, there was no reason for him to reveal his true ability in the assessment.

After obtaining the ability user license, the rest went smoothly. For now, I got a hotel room for him to stay in and paid to rent a house near mine.

In truth, I even thought about leaving the house and becoming independent. Since monsters would target me just because I was the Hero, my family would be the first ones in danger, as they were close to me. However, I thought back to what Loretta said. That I should wait a little while longer. That I should maintain my daily life until the day comes.

I knew what the daily life she was talking about meant. It wasn’t just the peace Loretta and I could enjoy together, but also my life on Earth. As such, it was fine for now. When the time came, she

would tell me. I knew she was doing what was best for me. Of course... I would have to answer her too. Uuuu, it was a rather embarrassing, happy, and strange feeling. Now that I thought about it, there was the problem with Ye-Eun too. My head was twice as confused.

Even while I was contemplating these things, I took care of Walker's hotel room and house rent. Walker suddenly asked.

“You must have a lot of money.”

“I can exchange gold for it, so I have more than enough for something like this.”

“Even though I'm on the 44th floor, I only get 100 gold for about every three monsters I kill. With that, I don't have much left over once I spend it on potions and buying and fixing equipment. At least, I don't have enough leftover to spend it on something like this. Is it different for you?”

“You're on the 44th floor and only 100 gold drops at a time? Ha, so that's what the Third Dungeon is like.”

“You really have talent for making people mad. You! Kuaak!”

I enjoyed watching Walker get angry and suffer by himself. Just like that, Walker became my neighbor and Yua got herself a trustworthy bodyguard. Only after I took care of these things could I finally return to the dungeon. Though, the dungeon's one week

period had only ended today.

I thought about challenging the Grim Reaper by myself again, but remembered Lin's words from a long time ago about many explorers being stuck on the 40th floor. As such, I thought I should try partying with them. The party I entered with that in mind was someone who looked to be at least 50 years old. Explorers didn't age as quickly as ordinary people, so it was likely that he was even older.

“Hm? I haven't seen you before. It's been a while since a newbie came to the 40th floor.”

After the party leader, other fairly old people greeted me. A few of them looked extremely worried.

“We're going to get wiped out quicker than usual. Shouldn't we kick him out?”

“Don't say that. Newbies have to get experience too. Since we're going to fail anyways, let's at least give him some experience.”

“We won't ever succeed anyways. We'll just rot away here on the 40th floor.”

“ ... ”

What was this... helplessness? An overwhelming sense of defeat permeated the atmosphere.

“Even if we break through, there isn’t much meaning to raising my level anyways. In that case, we might as well help the newbie out a bit.”

“Cheer up everyone. The newbie’s going to be dispirited if you keep it up.”

No, I want to punch your face out first... I held myself back from saying many things, and gave a short introduction.

“I’m Kang shin, an explorer from Earth.”

“Explorer from Earth?”

“Kang Shin? Wait... Kang Shin?”

“A few of our comrades who were stuck on the 40th floor broke through recently after partying with an explorer from Earth called Kang Yungoong.”

“I was there too. I died, but it seems they succeeded in the raid after that.”

“That’s not what’s important. I heard recently in the Residential Area. Kang Shin is the Crown Prince from the rumors.”

“Crown Prince is on the 40th floor...”

Even they knew the name ‘Crown Prince.’ With a bitter smile, I continued.

“I already broke through the 40th floor, so I can say this seriously. If you want to advance past this floor, just do your best to survive. I can’t be responsible for your safety.”

“Crown Prince...”

“Understood.”

“I also got it. I want to climb higher. I still have my world...”

“Perhaps... a miracle will also come to me. Although I left my world, I might be allowed to continue climbing...!”

Spirit returned to a few members. Good, this was enough. If I could light their cooled passion even a little bit, that was enough! I raised my Crimson Gluttony Spear into the air and shouted.

“The goal is for everyone to break through the 40th floor. Let’s go!”

“Ooooooh!”

However, the reaper was the worst opponent to take on in groups. He mostly used huge area of effect attacks, and when he

teleported behind a target he randomly chose, warriors received fatal injuries, and magicians and priests were killed in one hit. His blade waves, scythes being thrown out from his stomach, and black hands shooting out from the entire field were all fatal!

It was hard to deal with just the reaper, but there were 500 apparitions to worry about. From the start, I told the party members to focus on killing the apparitions, but they still died one by one in the process. By the time all the apparitions were killed, only three other party members remained alive.

“Kuk, today we lasted a long time.”

“To think we’d actually kill all the apparitions...”

“Watch out behind you!”

[Die!]

The moment the three of them heard my shouting, they rolled on the ground. The reaper’s scythe the swung above their bodies. Immediately afterwards, I stopped the reaper’s movements with Ruyue’s ability. Because of the reaper’s magical defense, Ruyue could only hold him for an instant, but it was still enough time for me to approach and stab him.

“Eat this!”

Divine Speed followed by White Lightning Consecutive Strikes!

From the consecutive spear attacks, a huge hole was pierced in the reaper's chest. He then escaped Ruyue's shackles and summoned the black hands while he flew up. However, I already knew how to deal with the black hands.

I infused Ruyue in my armor, and the black hands froze and shattered the moment they touched me. The others were huddled inside a holy barrier one of the surviving priests created. Confirming that they were safe, I shouted.

“Priest-nim, can you drop him from the sky!?”

“O Iloinu, bring down that evil being! Divine Hammer!”

[Kuaaaa! You insignificant bugs are annoying me!]

“I’ve been waiting for you!”

After dropping to the floor from the Divine Hammer, the reaper disappeared and appeared behind my back. I instantly turned around and stabbed his head with my spear. The lightning Spirit Aura from Peika rose up and drew his scream. Although he summoned a black scythe and dropped it on my head, if I was dumb enough to be hit by something like that, I wouldn't even be alive at the moment. With my spear still in my hands, I used his body as a pivot and spun, dodging the scythe. I then shook the spear more violently and shouted.

“Thunder Bomb!”

[Critical Hit!]

Even though my attack succeeded, I instantly backed off. A small scythe popped out of his body and flew through the air. His entire body was a weapon. I couldn't let my guard down for even a moment. I had to employ the hit-and-run method. Plus, even as I ran, I had to be careful as he had long-ranged attacks. He was truly an irritating boss.

[I'll kill you, Hero!]

“You think so much like me. I want to kill you too.”

I gave the reaper a cold smile and strengthened the grip on my spear. Then, without a shred of hesitation, I charged towards him. Like I'd die a second time from that guy! Taste the wrath of the week-old grudge!

[You obtained 37,500 gold.]

[Rewards will be distributed in order of contribution.]

[Kang Shin-nim's contribution is the highest. Choose your

reward.]

[1. Grim Reaper's Deathscythe

2. Soul Strengthening Elixir

3. Upper Mana Potion

4. Reinforced Battlesword]

In the end, I managed to kill the reaper without anyone else dying. However, the others were from different parties, and only looked at the reaper with half-happy, half-baffled expressions. I didn't really care about what they were feeling, so I simply looked at the reward list. Good, it was here. I immediately chose the Soul Strengthening Elixir and swallowed it.

[You consumed the Soul Strengthening Elixir. Your refined soul becomes strengthened. Your magic and charm increase by 1.]

A smile bloomed on my face. Good, I was getting stronger. I was advancing slowly, but surely. Being confident in my growth, I clenched my fists.

I would continue hunting the reaper, grow stronger, advance

onward in the dungeon, and continue growing stronger. I would raise my elementals, collect skills, and change my equipment if needed.

Like that, I would become stronger.

In order to not kneel in front of the despair these bastards always talked about.

Chapter 104. Those That Climb the Dungeon

(3)

I succeeded in evolving my Crown Prince title to the Crown Prince of 40F. The rumor that the Crown Prince had appeared on the 40th floor began to spread among other continents' explorers, and my party instantly filled up whenever I created a party. As I hunted the reaper three times every day, I was allowing up to 27 explorers to advance to the 41st floor every day. Of course, this was only in the case that everyone did their jobs and managed to survive. In reality, the number of people that advanced was less than half of that number.

From what I saw, there were about 1,500 people that were stuck on the 40th floor without being able to advance. In other words, after about a hundred days, most of the explorers would have advanced. However, after two weeks, my party stopped being filled up completely.

“They’re content as it is.”

An old magician who left his party behind to join mine told me after the raid ended.

“They’ve stayed like this for dozens of years. Imagine if you were in their shoes and you were suddenly given the opportunity to grow. Some will be happy, of course. Some might even tear up and thank you... But there will also be a considerable amount of people that become scared.”

“Why?”

“Because the weight on their shoulders would get heavier. The stronger you get, the more responsibility you have to bear. Plus, if you become stronger not by your own strength, but by borrowing someone else’s, you will hit another wall. They don’t want to see others looking at them with expectations, then becoming disappointed.”

“...”

Swallowing the Soul Strengthening Elixir, I listened to the old man silently. Since I never had to bear the heavy weights they were carrying, I didn’t have the right to say anything.

Getting stuck, breaking through, getting stuck, stuck, stuck. After repeating it for dozens of years, how much did they suffer?

As First Dungeon explorers, which only the most talented people were chosen to become, they undoubtedly received countless looks of envy, jealousy, and expectations. Near the end of their lives, when they realized they would only remain as mediocre warriors, how much shame would they have felt? Not to mention, for dozens of years, they would have only survived without improving... Would any passion or courage remain in their hearts? Would they be willing to challenge themselves again? Would they, who understood failure and defeat, be able to endure the expectations they would receive?

I asked the old man.

“Then what’s the reason you came to defeat the reaper with me?”

“Is that even a question?”

The old magician answered with a grin.

“It’s because I’m an explorer.”

“Haha.”

“I’ve failed a countless number of times, and countless numbers of people, who placed their expectations on me, turned their backs and left. I also just spent my days like the others. I’ve already climbed 40 floors, I’ve done well. Telling myself such excuses, I continued to lie to myself. But then you came. It was then that I snapped out of it. If I didn’t take on the challenge now, I realized I might never get another opportunity. Even if I might end up kneeling somewhere, I want to see what lies beyond this place. I want to let the blood in this old body boil.”

The old magician shouted.

“I’ve already experienced it for dozens of years! Even if I fail again, I wouldn’t be losing anything! I’m happy, I’m extremely happy that I can finally get out of this floor! Even if I can’t advance beyond the 41st floor! Even if it might only be an old man’s bravado! I will go on. Because this heart is the only thing that proves that I am an explorer of the First Dungeon! So? Did that

answer your question?”

“Of course.”

I smiled brightly as I answered. His words pierced deep into my heart, and I couldn't help but smile.

“You can definitely climb higher. I guarantee it.”

“Ha! If Crown Prince is saying that, I will believe it! Hahahaha!”

He laughed wholeheartedly, then he left my party and disappeared.

I had taken a jab when I had least expected it. But I wasn't displeased in the slightest. In fact, he had fanned my burning heart. Talking with the old magician, I was once again able to think about what a dungeon explorer was.

However, when I left the Floor Master room, I saw Lin with his usual unenthused expression. But, eh? Something about him seemed...

“What's wrong, Lin? Are you evolving?”

“I'm not evolving, but I'm being promoted.”

Lin did not have his usual cigarette as he spoke.

“Damn it, and it’s as Guild Master’s substitute... What a headache. This is all your fault.”

“Guild Master’s substitute? What about Loretta?”

When I said that, Lin shot me a glare. His fiery eyes were really burning. How cool. I wondered if I could get a skill like that...?

“Do you know what a huge mess has happened?”

“Of course I don’t. Explain please.”

“Ku, for the first time in several hundreds of years, noonim made a request to the Lord personally. To take down the 4,187 puppets in charge of the Floor Shops and to replace them with Fairy Garden and other administrative guild’s members.”

“Wow.”

I didn’t know Loretta was in charge of 4,187 Floor Shops with her puppets. It must have been tough. While I was trying to digest what I just heard, Lin was continuing his talk.

“Lord has to listen to noonim’s request. She’s done an incredible amount of work for the First Dungeon’s explorers, and she contributed a lot of other administrative duties...”

“Loretta did, huh...”

“She also put in several additional clauses, but what she wants is obvious... She wants to focus on supporting you.”

“Eh? Me?”

“Right. Not with a puppet, but with her real body. She wants to exclusively be your supporter. Even though she’s Fairy Garden’s guild master... Well, you are a Hero and the most famous rookie in the dungeon. Plus, since humans have short lifespans, Lord had to accept at least this much. The problem is, I’m the one who has to work more because of you!”

I was wondering why Lin was complimenting me, but he was lashing out instead. Hearing what Lin said about Loretta wanting to support me with her real body, I thought back to her recent confession. To spend her daily life with me, she had made such a move. I couldn’t help but be amazed.

“Hey, let me ask something.”

Lin spoke as he stared at me fixedly.

“... Did you do it?”

“D-Do what!? No, I didn’t do anything!”

“So something did happen. I doubt you made the first move, so it was noonim? Haa, how bold of her. She must have gotten impatient... So? What happened?”

“Lin, this was what you wanted to ask from the start, right?”

“Hurry up and answer. What happened? Did you do it?”

“I didn’t do anything! I-It’s on hold!”

Lin looked at me with a dumbfounded expression, then spat on the ground.

“You hopeless bastard... Do you even have ‘it’?”

“I do!”

When I answered with a serious expression, Lin simply sighed. Then, he finally took out a cigarette and asked with a more serious voice.

“Don’t make noonim cry. She’s more frail and pure than you’d think. I warned you, alright?”

“I... got it. I got it, so stop glaring at me like that.”

“Hmph, I said what I wanted to, so I’m leaving. Good luck further on. Don’t die and don’t fall. From what I can see, you’re one of the few with potential in this entire dungeon, so don’t lose your spirit no matter who you’re up against. Got it?”

“... Thanks, Lin. Good luck too, being the guild master substitute.”

“Argh... Yeah. I’m off.”

Lin faded away. I stared fixedly at the place he was standing, then turned away. I could still hunt the reaper one more time. The grind wasn’t over yet. However, someone interrupted me. It was Ye-Eun.

[I broke through the 20th floor!]

“You’re getting faster and faster. Did you do it solo?”

[Yeah! This guy tries to act cool, but he’s super weak. After being beaten up, he used something called Dragon Skin and kept slamming the ground with his spear, but he couldn’t do anything when I just stayed glued to the ceiling.]

So you could do that! No, ordinary explorers wouldn’t be able to stay on the ceiling on for that long! As I thought, Ye-Eun had a natural talent as an assassin. Thinking that she might actually catch up to me, I asked.

“Have you tried using Deific Manifestation?”

[Y-Yeah.]

“... Why is your voice shaking?”

[Scary. Deific Manifestation is scary.]

“Why!? What’s scary!?”

[It hurts. Training is too hard.]

She was talking in short phrases like a kid. It must have been really difficult... Even while I was feeling troubled, I tried to act calm.

“You must have met a good teacher.”

[She’s a vicious woman. Shin, save me. I want to see you so much.]

“We can see each other soon. Once you clear up to the 25th floor, we can go out for a drink.”

[Really? Okay, I’ll try my best! I’ll hurry!]

“Yeah, good luck. Ah, what magic did you get on the 10th floor?”

Did you also get Spirit Mastery?”

Although I thought Spirit Mastery was prepared for my Elementalist abilities, the solo clear rewards seemed to be fixed. From the rewards Ren told me about and with Ye-Eun also getting Deific Manifestation on the 5th floor, I was pretty sure of it. However, what Ye-Eun said next surprised me.

[Ah, I got something called Shadowsword Mastery. It’s super fun! If I hold my dagger and attack, my shadow attacks one more time! Or I can add my shadow’s power to me directly and hit harder! It’s super good!]

“What, that’s so cool!”

So the 10th floor reward was different! It was the perfect skill for Ye-Eun who was focused on attacking. Even while I was writhing in jealousy, I tried to act cool and congratulated her.

[Shin, what floor are you in now?]

“I’m grinding on the 40th floor.”

[Then I’ll catch up soon!]

“We’ll see. If you look down on the dungeon, you’ll regret it. Be careful.”

[I, I don't look down on it. I really don't. Uk, I'll get scolded again. Master will scold me.]

“Just who did you summon...?”

Even I felt slight fear at Ye-Eun's master that I had not met yet.

Chapter 105. Those That Climb The Dungeon

(4)

When I went to the Floor Shop the next day, I saw a beautiful elf. Long, black hair that flowed down, and golden pupils that shone brilliantly. Voluptuous chest and contrasting slender arms, legs, and waist. Without a doubt, it was Loretta, the real Loretta. The moment she saw me, she flapped her long ears excitedly. I wondered if elves could fly using their ears.

“My, what a coincidence seeing you here, Shin-nim.”

“How shameless, Loretta. Lin already told me everything.”

Loretta narrowed her eyes and glared at me.

“Even if it’s the same meaning, can’t you use the expression ‘cute’?”

“If I say cute, you’ll get startled and be noticeably happy, so I won’t.”

“... Tsk.”

Loretta clicked her tongue and turned away. It was much cuter than her shameless words from before, but I didn’t say it out loud. If I did, she would be happy and blush, and I would be even more flustered. Loretta let out a dry cough and continued.

“40th floor, the Grim Reaper. Since you got the first achievement, are you in the middle of completely conquering him?”

“Yep. I memorized all of his patterns, so killing him is pretty easy now.”

“This is the first time I heard anyone say that it’s easy to kill the reaper. You could’ve done it after hitting level 45...”

“No, I won’t do that anymore.”

At Loretta’s words, I answered her with such speed that even I was surprised.

“I want to grow my abilities. Not just my stats, but the overall abilities. Because I want to get stronger.”

“... If that’s what you want, I will, of course, support you from behind. From now, I will be directly supporting you, so do your best, Shin-nim.”

“With Loretta helping me, I feel assured. I’ll be sure not to let Loretta down.”

At my words, Loretta puffed out her chest and grinned. Then, I waved my hand at Loretta wishing me victory, and walked to hunt

the reaper again. Of course, I wasn't afraid of him anymore.

Three weeks later, I finished consuming Soul Strengthening Elixirs and finished collecting the Grim Reaper Set. The Grim Reaper's Deathscythe was given to the Gluttony Spear, raising its growth by 1%. With that, it was now at 3%. Since I've been told the spear would not grow from eating the same weapon more than once, I did not give it another one.

[Your soul becomes clear and strengthened to the peak. Your magic and charm increase by 3. Additionally, your luck increases by 5.]

[You equipped the Grim reaper Set. Your strength and magic increase by 20. When the Grim Reaper Set is equipped, you can use 'Shadow Blink' once per day. Shadow Blink teleports you behind a target and delivers a sudden strike. This attack will always be a critical hit.]

The Grim Reaper Set was made out of tattered cloth resembling the one the Grim Reaper was wearing. In fact, I looked so much like the Grim Reaper, I almost took my weapon out. However, its defense was incredibly sad compared to Crimson Dragon Scale Armor and even the Dullahan Set, so I extracted the skill and stored it in the 8 o'clock position, then stored the Grim Reaper Set for next year's Halloween party.

While I was grinding on the 40th floor, Ren had begun grinding on the 35th floor. Surprisingly, Palludia's party joined Ellos' party, and had reached the 33rd floor in a short period of time. They both didn't want to party with explorers from other continents, so I wondered what had gotten into them. However, I somewhat suspected that I had an influence on their alliance.

What was more surprising was that Shina had contacted me.

[Oppa, I broke through the 30th floor!]

“Oooh, that's was fast. Congratulations.”

[I already heard from unni that oppa broke through the 40th floor.]

“Unni? Oh, right, Palludia. You should have told me when we first met.”

[But I wanted to surprise oppa by telling oppa later. But I didn't think unni would charge forward so quickly...]

“I can hear you.”

[Of course, I was trying to let you hear! It was a roundabout declaration of war. I don't have a residence yet, but my breasts are a lot bigger than unni's! I have the competitive edge. Not to mention, I'm honest unlike unni. So? Charming, right?]

“I already knew you were charming. But you’re not a good match for me.”

[I... can I cry, oppa? If I’m not charming to oppa, there’s no point in being charming at all.]

I made a bitter smile and replied.

“There are many better men than me. Something must have been wrong with your eyes.”

[I trust my eye’s ability, but I like oppa regardless!]

Just like Palludia said, Shina was claiming that she liked me. Although Palludia told me not to believe Shina, as I couldn’t look into Shina’s heart, I couldn’t make a judgement thoughtlessly. As such, this was what I said.

“Yeah, then do your best to catch up to where I am. We have to be face to face if we want to talk. You didn’t forget how I looked like, right?”

[I didn’t! I think about you every night, really! Prepare yourself, the party member I recruited this time is extremely strong, so we’ll catch up to you quickly!]

“Party member?”

I suddenly felt uneasy again.

[Huhu, oppa might know her already. An explorer from Earth has been famous in the lower floors lately. She's called the Shadow Witch! She got her fame by helping beginner explorers advance to the 6th floor for about two weeks, but she appeared in the Residential Area just a few days ago! I've never heard of an explorer with such quick growth! I didn't miss this opportunity and recruited her into my party.]

“...”

[You see, this person is really, really strong! She might not even need party members. She's that strong! We challenged the 30th Floor Master together, but while we barely held the skeletons back, she practically toyed with the Skeleton Knight. She then said it was slightly easier than when she defeated it alone.]

“... If she's that strong, why did she enter your party?”

[I don't know. She said she's going to enter the party of the guy she likes, and said she'd party with us as practice.]

“Ah, I see. Good luck together.”

Ye-Eun, she already broke through the 30th floor! If I didn't hurry, she might really catch up to me. I was burning with fighting spirit. I cheered her on a bit, then walked to the staircase to the

41st floor, thinking I was going to have to take Ye-Eun out for fries soon. After all, she had already passed the 25th floor. Father had also passed level 50 and was bragging about becoming Gold rank, but I didn't care.

From the 41st floor, I was free from the undead. Zombies, ghouls, skeletons, and ghosts. I was happy to be finally freed from the rotting smell of flesh, but this happiness did not last long.

The 41st floor's monsters were wolves. They emitted the smell of wild animals and pounced at me from all directions. I was almost starting to miss the zombies. Plus, the 41st through 45th floor were all filled with wolves, just with different fur color and species. There were the direwolves, large wolves that easily passed 2.3 meters in size. Then, there were the werewolves, which were wolves standing on their hind legs. Other than the werewolves, all of the wolves were bigger and stronger than the materialized Ruyue. However, she was still faster, making them a good match.

Although Ruyue fought well, I wasn't used to fighting beast-type monsters, so it took a while for me to get used to them. In the end, it wasn't so different in that I had to dodge their attacks and attack when they had openings.

As a result, I reached the 45th Floor Master in just four days.

[Krrrrr...]

Loretta said that 45th and 50th Floor Master battles will be a pure fight of strength against strength. I believed her, but I didn't think

that strength was referring to size.

“He’s over 10 meters long...”

Although the Giant Iron Boar I met in Guangzhou was much bigger in comparison, I could still barely look at its face when I tilted my head up to the limit. In terms of spirit, the black furred wolf well overwhelmed the Giant Iron Boar.

The 45th Field was a wasteland. The black wolf was sitting in the middle of the wasteland with his legs folded and his eyes closed. When I approached him and raised my Gluttony Spear, his eyes shot open. The presence emanating out from him at that moment was incredibly overwhelming, making me burst into smiles.

“Good, I’ll have to fight large monsters like this often on Earth. I’ll train myself using you.”

[Krrrrr...!]

The wolf moved its front leg forward and lowered its body. He seemed to be preparing to charge at me. With his weight and speed, the force of impact would be enormous. I also lowered my body on Ruyue’s back and prepared to charge forward. I whispered to Ruyue.

“I’m trusting you, Ruyue. Let’s do this.”

[Auuuuuuuuu!]

At that moment, Ruyue charged forward before the giant wolf.

[Gruaaaaang!]

The giant wolf also charged towards us. When he stepped forward, a sandstorm brewed in the wasteland, blocking my sight. I left Ruyue in charge of our movement and focused on pinpointing his location and his method of attack.

“Ruyue, jump diagonally.”

[Auuuu!]

I held my Gluttony Spear horizontally and activated Elemental Blade. I held the spear with both my hands like a baseball bat, and when Ruyue had leapt past giant wolf’s thigh, I swung the spear with full force.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kuaaaaang!]

A stream of blood shot out into the air and the giant wolf screamed. What I didn’t expect was that it would somehow detect where we were and swing his tail at us like a whip! Ruyue hastily

poured out her Ice Breath and threw her body to the side. However, his tail, which seemed like it would get stuck at Ruyue's Ice Breath, became bigger and swept over us. It had made its already huge tail even bigger! I gritted my teeth and shouted.

“Shadow Blink!”

Ruyue and I were instantly teleported behind the giant wolf's neck.

[Krr?]

The giant wolf made a stupefied sound and turned its head to face us. In the process, his body turned to the other direction, and he turned his head again. His body then turned the other direction again. He slowly began to spin in circles. Thankfully, it seemed he still had the intelligence of a beast.

Meanwhile, I was focusing my energy on the spear tip for the critical damage that Shadow Blink guaranteed. Just like always, I raised my spear that had turned into a white bolt of lightning from Peika's power and my white-colored aura, striking down at the giant wolf's neck.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kiaaaaaaa!]

Blood spurted out from the area the spear struck, splashing onto me and Ruyue. It seemed to have felt immense pain from the attack, as it began to jump wildly to shake me off of him. With my face half-covered in blood, I gritted my teeth and raised my spear again, shouting, “Ruyue, hold on!”

[Okay!]

Ruyue stretched out her claws and stuck onto the giant wolf, and I wrapped my legs around Ruyue. Now that we were in a favorable position, I had no intention of getting off!

[Auu.]

“Ruyue, hold on just a little bit longer!”

[Auuu....!]

Something seemed to be wrong with Ruyue, so I decided to take care of the giant wolf swiftly.

“White Lightning Consecutive Strike!”

A barrage of spear attacks struck the hole created by my Heroic Strike, expanding it. Red blood continued to splash onto me, but it wasn't enough to interrupt my concentration. The only thing in my sight was the hole I had to dig deeper.

[Kuaaaang!]

Although I would have liked to attack him like this until he died, it was, of course, not so easy. Before my White Lightning Consecutive Strike could even end, the giant wolf let out a loud howl, then began to roll to the side. Shoot! I quickly canceled the skill and stuck to Ruyue.

“Ruyue, let’s jump off!”

[Okay!]

Before Ruyue and I became crushed paste, Ruyue leapt off his back and landed on the ground. Noticing that Ruyue and I had left, the giant wolf stopped rolling and raised its body. Then, it gave me a deathly glare.

[Kruaaaang!]

[Giant Wolf uses Blood Howling! All of Giant Wolf’s defense is converted to attack power!]

It was actually called Giant Wolf!? No, now was not the time. Its fur dyed red. At the same time, its front paws expanded to an unnatural size. Right, a fight of pure strength against strength... I was glad that it was so simple. I curled the corners of my mouth up and strengthened the grip on my Gluttony Spear.

“Fight me, you fat wolf bastard!”

[Guoooooooo!]

Chapter 106. Those That Climb The Dungeon (5)

[Guooooooooo!]

With an earthshaking roar, he charged forward. He was far faster than he had been previously, and taking his enlarged front paws into account, I could only barely dodge his attacks.

“Ruyue, focus on evading him. I’ll do the attacking!”

[Auuuu!]

Other than Floor Master skills, Elemental Blade was the only way for me to attack without taking any recoil damage. Being glad that I managed to obtain this skill, I called elementals into my spear blade again. Drinking Mana Potions as I used skills was now as natural as breathing.

[Kyaa, Prince-nim’s serious face! So cool!]

[When is the roller coaster taking off?]

[Where’s the seat belt? Do I grab the spear blade?]

[Ueee... I got on again, I’m going to throw up again!]

Ignoring the elementals' voices, I swung my 10-meter long spear as I glanced past the Giant Wolf. Its colossal front paw was cut and blood spurted out like a fountain. The moment Ruyue landed on the ground, she ran. Immediately afterwards, the wolf's hind leg stomped the area we landed.

[Aoooo!]

“It really is just like fighting a monstrous beast!”

I fixed my grip on Gluttony Spear and called the elementals again. With his size, it was impossible to take care of him quickly. I had already expected that the battle would drag out. Ruyue changed her direction and continued running. My target had not changed. It was still wolf's giant front paws that had become easy targets!

[Guaaaaaa!]

[Front paw is coming!]

Looking at the Giant Wolf's eyes burning with rage from the corner of my eyes, I raised my spear again. His giant front paw cut through the air and flew toward me. As I was sure just one hit would be enough to pierce my tough armor and deal a fatal blow, I laughed even louder.

“With just that... you can't catch me!”

Ruyue jumped, and I jumped from Ruyue's back. Unable to predict my movement, the Giant Wolf's front paw only swung past my feet. At that moment, I struck my spear down with all the strength I could muster. The elemental spear blade easily pierced its leather, which had lost its defensive power. Digging deep into the front paw, the elemental blade then exploded.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kuooooooooo!]

“Ruyue!”

[Auuuu!]

After recovering my spear, I landed on the back of Ruyue, who was waiting for me on the ground. However, I didn't have the time to leisurely check the result of my attack. The Giant Wolf raised all the hair on its body with rage and was running toward me. I couldn't let him hit me even once. I couldn't waste a week because of something so stupid.

Raising my spear and striking down on the ground, I shouted.

“Outburst!”

Crack! The wasteland fissured and rock shards rose, flying

toward the Giant Wolf, who was running towards me with vigor. Although it couldn't be compared to when Dullahan used it, hundreds of flying rock shards hurtling towards the Giant Wolf was a sight to behold.

With the area I struck my spear down on as the center, the ground rumbled and large rock shards shot up, flying toward the Giant Wolf. They were fast, numerous, and strong. It was the second attack skill among Floor Master skills, and I had great expectations for it. Its strength was better than what I had imagined.

[Critical Hit!]

[Critical Hit!]

As the Giant Wolf was charging forward with great speed, it could not dodge the numerous rock shards and received them with his body. With his defensive power lacking from the skill he used, blood spurted out wherever the rock shards struck him. Now that I thought about it, as long as I wasn't hit by him, there was no reason to fear his skill.

[Guaaaaaaa!]

Its dark red blood splashed on his already red fur, and dyed it in a

darker red. However, it did not falter and continued charging. With how big it was, it had a frightening amount of life force. Any other Floor Master would have been in dire straits from the loss of blood, but he only looked slightly weaker. What was important in fighting a massive monster was continued concentration and patience to continue attacking him until he died. I learned something important.

“Ruyue, let’s go, cut off his front paw entirely!”

[Auuuuuu!]

30 minutes after that, the moment I was waiting for had finally arrived. As a result of focusing my attacks on it, its enlarged front paw had finally been severed from his body.

[Kuoooooooo!]

He let out a heaven shattering scream and rolled on the ground. At the same time, his front paw disappeared into particles of light. With a grin, I fixed my grip on my spear. Having lost one of its front paws, he had lost both speed and strength. He could no longer even give a moment of thrill.

“Ruyue, let’s hurry up and finish this.”

[Auuuuu!]

Ruyue charged forward. As Ruyue and I already shared our

thoughts, Ruyue brought me to the destination I desired without me having to tell her. I raised my spear and collected my energy. I woke up my sleeping muscles and squeezed out strength from them. The Giant Wolf was still struggling to raise its body. Using the white lightning that formed in my hand, I aimed at the Giant Wolf's neck, the place I had drilled a hole in with Shadow Blink.

Then, I thrust forward.

[You became level 46. You obtained the qualification to advance to the 46th floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[You became Silver rank 2.]

[Amazing! You are the first in First Dungeon's history to succeed in soloing the Giant Wolf on the first try! The dungeon will remember you as a Great Explorer. You obtained 2 skill point as reward. Gods that love battles and wars begin to become interested in you. Remaining skill points: 18]

[You obtained the title, 'Giant Wolf Master.' All stats increase by 2. This effect will apply even if the title is not equipped.]

[You defeated the Giant Wolf alone. You obtained the special reward, 'Giant Wolf's Blood Hat.']

[You obtained 200,000 gold.]

[You received the only reward left hidden for the First Explorer. Congratulations! Your luck stat increases by 1.]

[Secret. Giant Wolf's Tattoo]

Really, compared to the Grim Reaper, the Giant Wolf was laughably easy. The Grim Reaper had several attacks that could hit me in ways I least expected, but for the Giant Wolf, there was nothing I had to be afraid of other than this body enlarging skill and skill that turned his defense into offense. I would remember him as the easiest boss along with the Wraith Queen.

As always, I asked message noona to open the message log and read the list of messages. There were two noteworthy things. First was that gods who liked battles and wars began to grow interested in me. Did this mean I was close to getting another god's true name? Hermes' Talaria was already very useful. No, did I even have the capacity to accept the power of another god's true name?"

I thought seriously for a while, but realized there was no need to worry about something that would happen in the future. In fact, I might be completely mistaken. I decided to consider the matter later, and moved on to the next matter.

The secret reward, Giant Wolf's Tattoo. It was clearly not a magic or a skill. Since experiencing it would be faster, I reached forward toward the reward. At that moment, something

emanating a blue light flowed into my arm and traveled down to my legs. I hurriedly took my armor off and checked my legs. Runic patterns were engraved from my thighs to my calves, glowing with a blue light.

[You obtained Giant Wolf's Tattoo. Your speed increases by 15% and increases the attack power of all charge type skills by 50%.]

“Wow...”

Although I didn't even have any rush-type skills, I would have a 110% attack power increase with Crimson Dragon Scale Armor's 60% increase. Now that things had come to this, I would really need to look around to see if I can get myself a charge type skill. Plus, there was the 15% speed increase! It was equivalent to the effect of my god's true name! Of course, 15% speed increase wasn't the only effect Hermes had, but I was surprised nonetheless.

But damn, I would not be living in a world 30% faster than everyone else. Just the first 15% was hard to get used to, but I had gotten another 15%... It would be troublesome to get used to it.

I complained in complete happiness and left the Floor Master room. Behind the Floor Shop counter, Loretta, who was lying on the bed she prepared and reading a book, got up slowly after seeing me, and greeted me.

“Oh, you’re already here?”

“Loretta does things I can’t even imagine so easily. It makes me tremble, though, not in respect.”

“I’m thinking about building a portable house. By the way Shin-nim, your body’s balance seems a little off.”

When I told her the effects of Giant Wolf’s Tattoo, she stared at my legs, as if to see through my armor, then nodded her head.

“I can’t see it, so take it off and show me.”

“I won’t show you! What are you asking for so naturally!?”

“Tsk, he almost fell for it...”

Loretta clicked her tongue as if she was close. Then, after a dry cough, she advised me.

“If you want to obtain a charge type skill, why don’t you try looking for it at the Residential Area? Not all skills are automatically acquired like the Floor Master solo rewards. The skill books that Event Dungeon bosses drop or given from quest rewards are exchangeable. Shin-nim, you’re overflowing with gold anyways, right? You don’t buy anything from the Floor Shop other than potions, battle vouchers, and Party Member Scarecrows... I came all the way here to support Shin-nim, but you don’t use me very often. I’m sad.”

“Potions, battle vouchers, and Party Member Scarecrows, that’s a lot. I’m using tens of thousands of gold per day... Anyways, I’ll be off.”

“Take me with you! I’m bored.”

Loretta flapped her ears and jumped out from the bed, locking her arms with mine. I tried to ignore Loretta’s fragrance and the shocking sensation in my arm, but it wasn’t easy.

“It’s hot, so get off.”

“I know you’re not hot, so let’s go like this. Come on!”

“This person, there’s no sense of distance these days...”

Now that Loretta had stuck onto me, there was no way to get her off. I resigned and went to the Residential Area. When I arrived at the entrance of my mansion, I saw the corpse of the Giant Iron Boar, which was still left neglected on the garden. I’m sorry, Giant Iron Boar. I want to eat you, but I’m busy finishing the melting tunas in my inventory...

While I was silently looking at the Giant Iron Boar, Loretta let out an exclamation of surprise and knocked on the Giant Iron Boar’s metallic legs.

“It’s the type that got stronger after death. Do you have a necromancer friend, Shin-nim?”

“Huh? What?”

“You’re fermenting it, right? It was originally weak, but a strong lightning energy was imbued into it the moment it died. Not to mention, this place is where the entrance to Fairy Garden is, meaning it’s full of elementals. Lightning energy is building up in its body, compressing its body and amplifying its energy. If you leave him like this, he’ll become a great undead for sure. One that’s much stronger than he was when he was alive.”

“...”

No, it said it wouldn’t rot, so I was just storing my food supply here... Not that I could tell her that. Now that I looked at it, its 70-meter long body length was now about 60 meters long. Its hair that was burnt black also seemed to be flickering with sparks...

I smiled nonchalantly.

“Hahaha, let’s go out, Loretta!”

“So it was a coincidence...”

Maybe I’ll learn necromancy later! I passed it off as something trivial for now and dragged Loretta outside the mansion to the Residential Area. Left behind in the garden was the Giant Iron

Boar's corpse, admirably fermenting itself.

Author's Note:

Alright, let's go! With this spirit, we'll quickly clear the 50th floor!

Chapter 107. Those That Climb The Dungeon (6)

As we strolled through the Residential Area, Loretta received countless gazes from others. Of course, I knew why. At first glance, they would be surprised at Loretta's appearance; at their second glance, they would be awed by her otherworldly beauty; and at their third glance, she would look even prettier than when they looked at her the first time. That is, as long as she didn't open her mouth. Loretta ruined her goddess-like appearance by talking like an idiot. Though, that was her charm as well.

“Was there an elf like that in the First Dungeon?”

“I thought the most beautiful explorer was the Luka continent's crown princess.”

“No, on the higher floors, there's another famous beauty. From that... ruined continent.”

“But it's been dozens of years since she made an appearance.”

“Hey, that elf isn't an explorer.”

“I know who she is. She's the master of one of the administrative guilds. She was so pretty that I remembered it.”

“I didn't think she was dating a rookie...”

“I’m jealous, damn it.”

There were some that realized who Loretta was from her appearance. Most of them looked strong. With a bitter smile, Loretta explained to me.

“There are times when I have to make my appearance as the guild master.”

“So you actually do your guild master work. Ow!”

Loretta got angry and smacked my arm.

“I’m a proper guild master! Though it’s Lin’s job now.”

“Lin said he was a substitute, though.”

“Well, that’s how everyone becomes the master. Huhu, Lin is actually very suited to be a leader. Lin’s special ability was the only reason why a human like himself could enter Fairy Garden.”

“Lin isn’t a human, but a draconian...Well, it’s fine. By the way, Loretta, what are you going to do if you stop being a guild master?”

“You see, my dream was always to become a housewife! So I’ll become employed to Shin-nim.”

“I’d like my partner to be able.”

“S-Should I... continue being a guild master...?”

“Loretta should do what Loretta wants, but I want to marry a woman who actively improves her life.”

“W-W-Work... I have to work... Kuk, but I want to play...!”

The way Loretta’s ears trembled like she was in deep agony was too cute. However, while I was preoccupied with making fun of Loretta, I accidentally bumped my shoulder into someone. Although my shoulder hurt, I apologized since I was the one at fault for not watching where I was going.

“Sorry, are you okay?”

“Of course. I’m more surprised that you’re okay after bumping into me. I haven’t seen you before, so you must be a newbie.”

It was the low, silvery voice of a woman. I raised my head. In front of me was a young beauty my height, with most of her figure hidden by a black armor. She was looking at me with eyes of interest.

Inside her beautiful amber eyes, a pair of unusually sharp and long, vertical pupils left a deep impression on me. They were not

the eyes of a human, but those of a beast. As if to wipe away any hint of doubt, two triangular ears were on her head.

“Beastman...”

“Oh, so you know. Right, I’m a beastman.”

“Leb, let’s go! Saure already ordered our drinks.”

“Shin-nim, you’re walking with me, but you’re looking at other women?”

Someone who seemed to be her companion called her while Loretta pulled me with her arms linked to mine. The woman replied to her companion that she’d be there in a moment.

“You even have an elf girlfriend? You’re doing pretty well, rookie. Let’s hear your name, I’ll remember it.”

“I’m Kang Shin, an explorer from Earth.”

“I’m Lebuik from the guild, ‘Demonic Girls’. Good luck climbing to the higher floors. I’ll take you out for a drink the next time we meet.”

With that, she waved her hand and turned away. The clunking of her fancy, black armor proved that she was a skilled explorer from a higher floor than mine. Plus, on her back, there was a stupidly

large and thick, black claymore, which even I might have trouble carrying.

Looking at it, I was sure. It wasn't the time to be shocked about her being a woman.

“So you weren't dead.”

“... Who said I was dead? Bring me the guy who had the audacity to say that.”

“Shin-nim...?”

Right, he must have had the possibility in mind when he asked me. It might have even gone past the point of being a possibility, and he might have even been sure. After all, he wasn't a complete idiot. If I told him, what would he...

I spoke, “There's an explorer who got famous on the 35th floor. They call him the Golden Lion.”

“Golden Lion? What's that? Tsk, can anyone be called Golden Lion these days? There's only one true Golden Lion, the Panan continent's... Huh, never mind. Rookie, what is it that you want to say?”

“The Golden Lion you're talking about is rushing through the First Dungeon with his own strength.”

“... Ren-nim is?”

I was surprised that she addressed him as Ren-nim. While I was imagining what status Ren had, the woman jumped at me. No, she jumped at me but was instantly pushed away. I saw Loretta stepping forward angrily.

“Do you want to get beaten, customer? Do you? You can’t touch other customers that don’t belong to you. Understand? Do you want to know what Last Bullet tastes like? Do you want to try it?”

“Kuhuk... What kind of an elf...!”

Lebuik got up, holding her stomach in pain. There was a crack in her armor. Seeing her ears folded down, she looked especially pitiful.

“You, who are you?”

“I’m the Floor Shop’s Loretta. Regardless, if you want to ask Shin-nim a question, can you do it without making contact with him?”

“Floor Shop? The administrative guild...! Ku, that hurt.”

Seeing this strong explorer in pain didn’t feel like someone else’s problem, so I asked her with worrying eyes.

“Are you okay?”

“Ah, yeah, I’m fine. Anyways, if you know about Ren-nim, can you tell me more about him? I assume Ren-nim is still noble and beautiful.”

I had just heard two words that didn’t fit Ren the most.

In the end, I ended up staying with Lebuik, who was about to head to the bar, a bit longer. Lebuik had two companions, one was a human woman who had called out to her, Zevina (shield warrior). The other was a dwarf woman who had already ordered drinks at the bar, Saure (axe warrior). I wondered if all of her guild members were warriors, but I was told that one of the five members was a priestess. The remaining guild member was a claw warrior. With everyone’s classes being so macho, I was surprised that everyone was female.

“So, w-what about Ren-nim...?”

The moment I received a glass, Lebuik asked me impatiently. Her cheeks were bright red. As she didn’t drink anything yet, she was undoubtedly flushed. Feeling a murderous intent toward Ren boiling inside me, I replied,

“I first met him on the 20th floor. He couldn’t control his temper then and almost died.”

“Huhu, he does have that cute side to him.”

“... After that, he stayed with me for a while and fixed his bad habits. In the end, he succeeded in defeating the Lizard Knight alone.”

“A-Alone? The Lizard Knight? Kuk, I should have seen it... Ah, he must have looked so cool.”

“After that, he continued to climb the dungeon alone and succeeded in defeating all the Floor Masters alone. In the process, he gained some fame from helping other explorers defeat the Floor Masters. He should still be on the 35th floor to get strengthening elixirs from the Floor Master.”

“Strengthening elixirs? The thing that only drops occasionally? Wow, I can’t believe he’s grown so much... He must look incredibly handsome now... Like a real man...”

Lebuik’s cat-ears twisted and revealed her confused emotion. Meanwhile, Loretta was confirming information about Ren through my whispers.

“Shin-nim, the Ren you’re talking about is that messy-haired customer, who makes people even looking at him feel hot, right? Are you sure that customer isn’t talking about someone else?”

“Loretta, to be honest, I was confused about the same thing.”

“I’m surprised. I didn’t think this man named Ren was real. Leb always talks about him when she’s drunk.”

“Exactly. Once she starts talking about Ren, she won’t talk about anyone else for the day, so today’s already over.”

In front of me was the cute dwarf girl Saure. No matter how I looked at her, she looked like an elementary school kid. Seeing her holding a beer mug and hitting it against Zevina, I felt overwhelmed, but I managed to pass it off as I had already gotten used to dwarves from Fairy Garden’s Lotang. Meanwhile, Lebuik’s madness was still continuing.

“He was cute ever since he was little... When I was sparring with him with wooden swords, he fell down and scraped his knees. He then ran to me with teary eyes... haak, haak.”

I felt disgusted. Both by Ren’s crying face that I imagined and by that woman who was letting out weird breathing noises as she imagined the same crying face.

“W-When I licked his wound, he tried to smile bravely with tears still in his eyes, saying ‘I’m fine now, Sir Lebuik!’ ... haa, haa.”

“Leb, you have a nosebleed.”

After enjoying herself for a while, thinking about Ren’s younger self, Lebuik’s ears and tail suddenly drooped in sadness.

“But, I... leaving Ren-nim by himself in Panan continent... Uk, uuk...”

“How much did that person drink?”

“One glass. Just one glass of beer.”

“I, I... should have been with him. I, I shouldn't have thrown it away... but still, I wanted to live...”

“Ren thinks you're dead.”

“That's a lie. The knights that were with me on the battlefield must have lied... After all, I ran away right in front of them. In front of everyone's eyes, I opened the door to the dungeon, to survive by myself... Leaving behind the honor and pride of beastmen...”

“...”

The light atmosphere had suddenly turned sour. Saure and Zevina, who were clashing their glasses in a good mood, suddenly looked grim. I suspected that they had similar experiences. As explorers of the First Dungeon, they must have abandoned the country and world they were from, into the dungeon.

I opened my mouth to say something, but I realized I only had unqualified criticisms to say. I stayed silent. That would only be the grumbling of an immature child, who had never experienced

the unfairness of cruel reality. In this safe space, they would be vulnerable to my words lacking self-awareness.

As such, I said the best thing I could say in this situation.

“Ren wanted to see you. He was looking for you... If you’re alive, he will be happy with just that.”

“B-But... I don’t have the qualification to see him. In the hopeless Panan continent, he is the only remaining explorer. He has a truly great and noble soul. Just by meeting him, his soul will be hurt. I’m scared. The fact that I can still affect him... No, I can’t meet him... I don’t have the qualification to stand next to him, much less talk to him. I’ll just think about him alone, like this... hic.”

“She started crying.”

“There’s no choice now. Stop bothering Leb now. We... want it to stop too. Sorry, even though we’re the ones who invited you.”

Zevina and Saure felt uncomfortable with us as well. I exchanged bitter smiles with Loretta and got up. I didn’t think our conversation would end in the worst way possible. If Ren came to the Residential Area and heard about Lebuik or even met her...

“Sir Lebuik.”

“... Don’t call me that. I’m no longer a knight.”

“If Ren will change just because of meeting you, he wouldn’t have survived on his own until now. So don’t worry and try meeting him... Your wound will have to be ripped open one day.”

That is, before it festers and becomes bigger from being left alone. She seemed to have understood my meaning as her ears twitched slightly. She then murmured in a barely audible voice.

“... Can I add you to my friend list?”

“Of course.”

Just like that, I met with Ren’s master, Lebuik, and parted. Although Lebuik had abandoned her world, she was still climbing the dungeon as an explorer. Just what was it that she was hoping for in the end? Perhaps... as long as she had the desire to continue challenging, as long as her world didn’t collapse completely, would she still have the chance to go back?

Although Lebuik was worried that she’d change Ren, my thoughts were different.

Ren was a warrior, one that walked forward without ever looking back. If it’s him, he might rekindle the fire in that runaway knight’s heart. If it’s him, he might change her.

Hoping and worrying for that to be the case, I surprisingly realized that I was thinking a lot about Ren.

For the record, I couldn't buy any charge type skills from the auction house. Damn, nothing in this world was easy!

Author's notes:

With the First Dungeon's important explorers appearing, this chapter has come to an end. I wanted to show you what kind of explorers they were more vividly, but my lack of ability might have somewhat made it hazy. What did you think, everyone? ^^

Translator's notes:

While translating this chapter, I realized I originally translated "charge type skills" as "rush type skills" (for the Rage Rush Boots) for the reason that 'charge' sounded like 'charging' (as in, storing energy over time).

Since I did "charge type" when I translated the Crimson Dragon Scale Armor (oops), I decided to just stick with it. Just remember that "charge type" is like "rush type", as in "to rush forward in attack."

Chapter 108. Requirements Of A Dimensional Mercenary (1)

I was right in trying to use the Giant Wolf to develop a battle strategy against giant monsters. Although the Giant Wolf's movement patterns were almost too simple, he certainly had disaster level speed and strength. With its size, it had boundless life force, and I had to train my patience and holding my focus for dozens of minutes to fight against it. Although fighting the Giant Wolf could not give me a heart-pounding thrill, I shouldn't just be seeking thrill in fights for my growth. I considered it a chance to steadily grow my abilities.

Another ability I have to improve was my communication with Ruyue. I had to strengthen my bond with her by being more intimate. Although Peika complained that I only materialized Ruyue and was more intimate with her, I couldn't help it as Peika was much stronger when she was infused into my spear with Spirit Aura than when she was materialized. To make it up to her, when I was training and not having a real battle, I had Peika materialized. Calling the elementals, materializing them, and making contact with them more often to increase our closeness were the easiest way of letting them grow.

[Shin! I love Shin!]

[That's enough! You're always sticking close to Master. You need to learn to share from time to time!]

Ruyue stuck to me excessively, and although Peika tried to stop Ruyue, Peika wasn't too different from Ruyue. Since how much the

elementals liked me would only help their growth, I simply made a bitter smile and hugged them both, but I did find it a bit strange. They liked me more than what my Elementalist skill levels would suggest... Though, I knew emotions couldn't be reflected by skill levels. I also couldn't understand why Ruyue, who I only met recently, seemed to like me more than Peika. Perhaps it was because of the circumstances of how we met.

Coming back to the subject of the Giant Wolf, his unexpected partial gigantification attack was undoubtedly dangerous. Although I didn't feel threatened due to my excellent senses, ordinary explorers without sufficient detection abilities would find the attack fatal.

Even in the boss fight I had with explorers who were stuck on the 45th floor, two explorers died from the gigantification attack even though they were on their guard. The other explorers who survived also thought it was strange how I could dodge the Giant Wolf's attack so perfectly. Because it was frustrating, I tried to explain simply.

"There are signs. You can see how his muscles move, right? When muscles that have nothing to do with his current movement suddenly expand, you know that part will gigantify. Easy, right?"

"Crown Prince sucks."

"Damn it, I want to kill him."

I had gotten haters for the first time. Damn, they hated me even

though I explained so simply...!

In truth, I wasn't really looking forward to the strengthening elixir that the Giant Wolf would drop. Strengthening elixirs raised two stats up to 10 times, totaling 12 points into each stat, equivalent to about 5 levels worth of stat points. Skin Strengthening Elixirs and Soul Strengthening Elixirs both increased my charm stat, which didn't have much impact in direct fights. However, I recently found out that the charm stat played an important role, so I wasn't that dissatisfied about it increasing. I suspected that the Giant Wolf's strengthening elixir would be something similar.

However, I was surprised by a completely unexpected outcome. Even the elixir's name was different.

[1. Wolf's Tattoo Invigoration Elixir]

The moment I saw it, I smacked my knees. Tattoo Invigoration Elixir! It wasn't worth anything to people who couldn't defeat the Giant Wolf alone! It was absurd. I felt strongly that the dungeon was changing the higher I went.

The dungeon was expecting something from the explorers and encouraged them to perform certain actions. Was I meeting its expectations? I felt happy every time I was assured that the path I was walking on was the correct one, but I also felt bad that I was playing in the hands of someone I didn't know. If I could attach a name to that someone, it would be the 'Lord' that members of the

Fairy Garden talked about. Would he know everything about this dungeon? Will I be able to meet him one day? Of course, I didn't have any answers now.

In any case, since the secret reward was the Giant Wolf's Tattoo, it seemed the normal solo reward was just the Wolf's Tattoo. I felt a sense of pride, then shame from doing so as I ate the elixir.

[Your Giant Wolf's Tattoo becomes more invigorated. Your speed increases by 0.5% and dexterity increases by 1. Additionally, since you have the Giant Wolf's Tattoo, your speed increases by 0.5% and dexterity by 1.]

I wish it didn't use another sentence to say the same thing. It could have just said my speed increased by 1% and dexterity by 2. It seemed the ordinary Wolf's Tattoo only increased speed 0.5% and dexterity by 1. Thus Tattoo Invigoration Elixir could only have its full effect on me.

I despaired slightly at the fact that my speed increased by another 1%, when I had just gotten used to the 15% boost. Feeling that I would be fighting myself for a while, I sighed. My premonition came true, as every time I got used to the speed increase the Tattoo Invigoration Elixir gave me, eating dozens of Tattoo Invigoration Elixirs in the process, the elixir gave another 1% increase. Not to mention, the light the tattoo gave off increased every time to the point it stuck out like a sore thumb if I didn't cover it with my pants. Although it was fine during the winter, it seemed I wouldn't be able to wear shorts during the summer. Though, my body's temperature no longer fluctuated because of the length of my

pants.

One month had passed since then. March was right around the corner, and I had to go back to school for the second semester. As I made the extreme decision of taking four online classes, I only had to go to school for four days! Heh, being a college student was really only to disguise my real identity. What was important to me was not at the college. Ye-Eun, I chose to abandon my grades!

During that time, the Field Dungeons were taken care of one by one, and only America and Japan were having trouble with theirs. Japan seemed to have made some progress, but Antelope Valley's Field Dungeon, Wyvern's Nest, was expanding its territory, just like people feared. The U.S. government gave up several benefits and requested every country for help. As ability users were now the greatest resources a country could possess, it was doubtful that any of them would accept their request so easily. Of course, a country didn't function with only ability users, and some countries had negotiated to send their SS rankers with the condition that they escape when a dangerous situation occurred.

If the matter with Brightman had not happened, Britain with their two SS rankers would have been able to trade with America more easily, but because they covered for Brightman's indiscretions, they had completely lost Hwaya's trust and were most likely panicking, trying to regain her assistance. It served them right.

That aside, I did want to try hunting wyverns... Since I had several escape tools in my arsenal, I thought about going there someday.

In any case, no matter how much everyone was having trouble with the Field Dungeons, I was focusing on the 45th Floor Master, Giant Wolf. Today was the day the grind would end.

[Krrrrruuuaang!]

“Crown Prince-nim, be careful!”

“This much is nothing!”

The Giant Wolf could gigantify any part of his body. When it gigantified just a single claw and sent it flying, I was almost shocked to death. Today, it even gigantified its head and tried to swallow me whole. As Ruyue had leapt right in front of him, she couldn't evade the attack unless she could freely fly.

Without a shred of hesitation, I leapt up on Ruyue's back and dematerialized Ruyue. The Giant Wolf's mouth chomped down on the area Ruyue and I had been in, and I landed on the Giant Wolf's nose bridge. After gigantification, its eyes were bigger than my own body. Being stared down by his eyes sent a chill down my back, but I used Ruyue's power to fix my feet onto the nose bridge and grinned.

Ruyue's power froze my boots completely and prevented me from falling off the Giant Wolf no matter how much he shook his head. That said, staying like this would get dizzy, so I had to end it fast!

“It’s time for firework! Uaaaaak!”

[You used Crimson Roar. Everything blazes as flames.]

In an instant, everything within my sight became flames and burned violently. Even knowing that the flames would not hurt me, I could not help but close my eyes shut. Naturally, attacked by the large flames directly, the Giant Wolf’s two eyes also received irrecoverable damage, burning completely.

“Uwah, I heard about it already, but it really is a vicious skill!”

“The barrier is going to get broken through! Reinforce it!”

As I had already warned them, my party members had dug a hole for themselves in the distance and were hiding under a barrier. Even so, the flames were affecting them. Wasn’t that the army’s gas chamber training? With the rather useless thought, I raised my spear and aimed it at the Giant Wolf, who was in pain from having lost his eyes.

“Alright, let’s end this!”

[Kruaaaaang!]

You can cry all you want! I won't stop hitting you because of it!

[You consumed Wolf's Tattoo Invigoration Elixir to the limit. The Giant Wolf's Tattoo has been invigorated to its peak. Your speed increases by 6%. Your dexterity increases by 6.]

[You learned the skill, 'Gale Track,' from invigorating the Giant Wolf's Tattoo to its peak! It is a charge type skill, using extreme speed and seeking only destruction! When used, you will become super-armored for the duration, pushing away everything in your path. Every time an enemy is pushed away, your attack power increases by 5% up to 100%. The skill's power will increase with speed. If you have a riding skill, you can use it while riding. When attacking the enemy at your destination, wind attribute will be imbued to your weapon, amplifying its power. The charging speed and power will increase with skill level.]

"Oh."

I was wondering where the charge skill was hiding, but to think it was in my tattoo! Plus, it even dealt a final blow after the reckless charge! It was just my taste. I waved my hand and sent my party members off, then went to report what happened to Loretta.

"Really? Well, Shin-nim is the first one to obtain the Giant Wolf Tattoo, and I haven't seen anyone other than Shin-nim consume Tattoo Invigoration Elixir to the limit... So, what was the skill that the Giant Wolf Set had?"

“That’s...”

At Loretta’s question, I could only make a strange smile. I was secretly hoping for Blood Howl, which converted all defense to attack power, but...

[You equipped the Giant Wolf Set. Your dexterity and magic increase by 20. When the Giant Wolf Set is equipped, you can use ‘Gigantic’ once per day. Gigantic is a strong skill that enables you to enlarge and wield a body part, or weapon or equipment connected to your body. However, without the strength to wield the enlarged target, this skill may be catastrophic to you.]

“You don’t have to make that face, Loretta. I already know.”

“Ahaha, well not all Floor Master skill can be to your liking. Um... Do your best.”

“Who knows, maybe a day will come when I will use this skill.”

For reference, I tested it out by gigantifying my spear, but as it became dozens of meters long, I couldn’t even grab and swing it. Although my strength was enhanced by the elixirs I had eaten, I would need at least twice my current strength to wield it properly. Since I had received an unexpected gift from the tattoo, I would have to deal with the lackluster set equipment skill.

“Then are you going to the 46th floor now? Before you go, play with me for a bit. Please?”

“Loretta should be cheering on the warrior, not being spoiled by him ... is what I want to say, but...”

When I lengthened my words, Loretta’s eyes sparkled and she held my hands tightly.

“You’ll play with me?”

“School starts today.”

“... Tsk.”

Loretta’s eyes quickly lost their light. She clicked her tongue and let go of my hands. I laughed helplessly and left the dungeon. Since it was only the first lecture, I probably didn’t need to go, but I felt it was wrong to miss even a single day of lessons.

But when I went down to the 1st floor, an unexpected sight entered my eyes. Mother was serving tea to Walker, who had his real face showing. Yua was also eating a toast with jam, getting ready to go to school.

“Walker, why are you here?”

“Your mother invited me. Your family really knows what manner is.”

“That sounds like you’re saying I don’t have any manners.”

“There’s a letter for you. I didn’t think you had any overseas friend other than Mastiford.”

Huh? What? I tilted my head and accepted the letter from Walker. It was from America, and the sender’s name was also in English. Ciara Kenex...? On the other hand, the receiver’s name, Kang Shin, was properly written in Korean. I ripped open the envelope, and read the small, pink letter.

This was the first line.

‘Dear Earth’s Hero.’

Chapter 109. Requirements Of A Dimensional Mercenary (2)

After reading the first line, I folded the letter as naturally as I could and put it in my pocket. Then, I casually asked Walker.

“Walker, have you read the letter?”

“No, so don’t kill me.”

To think he saw through my poker face, it seemed Walker had gone through much training. I smiled at him, signaling him to not say anything, then patted Yua, who was eating her toast.

“Yua, oppa’s off.”

“Okay. Make sure to tell me if something happens.”

Since Walker noticed, there was no way that Yua didn’t. With a bitter smile, I patted her head again.

“Of course. It’s nothing, so don’t worry about it.”

“Ehehe. That tickles.”

“See you later, son.”

“Yes, mother.”

Yua smiled innocently and mother saw me off as if nothing was wrong. The women in my family were all really thoughtful. Although I didn't want to admit it, they were much more refined than father or me, who were the same on the inside as the outside. Though, I was sometimes scared from being unable to read their thoughts!

[Dear Earth's Hero.

You must be surprised by the sudden letter, but electronic forms of communication can be intercepted, and I was afraid to send you a telepathic message out of the blue, so I've decided to send you this letter using my acquaintance in Korea.

I am Ciara Kenex, S+ rank Awakened residing in America. It is not that I am strong. The reason I became S+ rank... though it's a bit embarrassing to say myself, is because I have a special ability.

Hero-nim, the reason I know about Hero-nim is also because of my ability.

It has already been a year since the world changed. I know, I know that you are slowly becoming complete. It is also why I chose to contact you now.

I want to meet you. I know about the dungeons that have invaded this world and wish to prepare for it with Hero-nim.

If it's okay with Hero-nim, can you visit America's S rank Field Dungeon as Thunder Knight, under the pretense of helping out? In that case, I will be there and visit Hero-nim.

I apologize if it sounds like I am trying to use Hero-nim's strength. Since I am not in a position to do anything with my body, there, unfortunately, isn't a way for me to visit Hero-nim myself. I only barely got the permission to visit the Field Dungeon this time. Usually I'm...

Please. I want to meet you. The second wave will arrive soon. Before it becomes difficult to move again, I want to meet with you.

I know you are already busy with something. You can come after you have taken care of it. If you contact the address in this letter, I will make the preparations for you to secretly enter America. Of course, be careful not to reveal too much information.

If you do not wish to enter the S rank Field Dungeon after meeting me, I will take measures for you to go back immediately. So please, trust me and come.

With respect and love, Ciara Kenex.]

Ciara Kenex. I searched her name immediately, but there wasn't any information about her. An S+ ranker should be well known globally. As there was less than 200 S rankers on Earth, it was only obvious that information about them was widespread. However, there was no info on Ciara Kenex. Almost as if she didn't exist.

Almost as if someone had erased any information about her.

No one from Earth should know that I'm Earth's Hero. Then how did she know? Was she related to the dungeon? No, there were still only 6 dungeon explorers, and I was fourth in the rankings, behind Hwaya, father, and Walker. Below me should be Japan's Minami Violet Sumire, and my friend, Su Ye-Eun.

This ranking system didn't care which dungeon we were in, and only estimated our ranking based on the floor we had reached. It was why I was in fourth place. Hwaya was clearly highest, father had recently broken through the 50th floor, and Walker was on the 48th floor. Walker seemed to be climbing fast, as he focused his entire afternoon on climbing the dungeon.

In any case, this Ciara Kenex wasn't connected to the dungeon. According to her, she knew I was the Hero because of her ability. Then should I meet her?

'It's a bit iffy, but...'

I didn't know how much she knew about me. Not to mention, she knew about my house address and could deliver a letter through an acquaintance in Korea. I couldn't just say, 'Oh, you know I'm the

Hero? Let's meet!' However, if she found my identity and my house address through her ability, she would undoubtedly appear again unless I went and killed her.

After thinking about it for a bit, I concluded that it wasn't something I should be afraid of or back away from. Not to mention, I wanted to visit Wyvern's Nest eventually. Did this woman know about that too and was trying to bait me with it?

"Shin, class is over."

"Ah, yeah, you're right."

Unless the professor was incredibly strict or the class was incredibly difficult, the first class usually ended early after a short orientation. When my head was full with the name Ciara Kenex, Ye-Eun pulled on me.

"Let's go eat."

"Alright, but not Korean food."

"But that's cheaper..."

"Even if I have to pay ten times more, I'll eat something else."

Exchanging small talk, we left the lecture room. When the massacre happened at the business department's MT, everyone

was incredibly shocked, but it seemed it was slightly better now after winter break had passed. As a hundred people had died, many people were undoubtedly friends with the deceased students. Of course, that wasn't the case for me. Though I shouldn't be happy about it, I was truthfully happy that I did not have to mourn the death of someone I knew.

We had to get used to the world we were living in. Pushing away cancer, heart disease, and other causes of death, 'monster encounter' has become the number one cause of death. We were living in a world where it wasn't weird to hear that a friend had been killed by a monster after waking up in the morning. No matter how active Guardian and Freedom Wing were, they couldn't take care of monsters immediately after they appeared.

“Hey, do you want to enter a student group?”

“I'd rather focus on the dungeon.”

“Shin, don't you think you should enjoy life a little more?”

“In my life, there's only been training and dungeon... Though, other things are beginning to fill up my life, but college life just isn't for me.”

“Ehew, really, I'm saying the two of us should spend more time together!”

“I'm going to have to refuse.”

“I hate you!”

Student groups are just people with similar hobbies hanging out and going for drinks. Every break, they'd go to an MT and drink together.

If that was all, I was already doing something similar. I fought the Floor Master with people of similar levels, and drank potions when my HP or MP fell low. When Event Dungeons happened on Earth, I'd go there with my allies and drink potions. It was the same thing.

“Kuuu, I'll catch up to you soon, just you wait! I'm almost on the 40th floor!”

“You're defeating all the bosses solo, right?”

“Yeah! Although I'm in a party these days, I temporarily leave it and do it alone first!”

Ye-Eun complained about Dullahan being tricky to deal with. Listening to her, I estimated her strength, and was sure she reached S rank by now. Even so, the 40th Floor Master was different than the previous Floor Masters.

“40th floor is especially tricky so be careful. Even if you're hiding, he'll suddenly appear behind you and slash down with his scythe.”

“It’ll be fine if Shin teaches me everything! So, how about tonight, the two of us-ow.”

“You can come back if you die once. Since you can’t get the first achievement anyways, it’s fine if you die once.”

“Chet, can’t you just nicely teach me? You know, this and that...”

Seeing Ye-Eun pouting like a duck, I grinned. I felt stupid for worrying about the matter with Ciara Kenex. These days, whenever I talked, I kept finding darkness lurking everywhere and turned gloomy, but I liked Ye-Eun because it wasn’t like that with her. She didn’t hide anything, and was simple, honest, and straightforward. Moreover, she genuinely liked me. Maybe meeting Ye-Eun was the best thing that happened to me from coming to college.

Ye-Eun’s murmuring monologue was continuing.

“We can drink together deep into the night... do this and that... and it’ll be the next morning.”

With a smile, I pinched Ye-Eun’s cheeks and pulled on them.

“Hey, confess your criminal plan now. The severity of your punishment will change depending on your answer.”

“I-It’s not a criminal plan! It’s a family plan!”

“That’s even more dangerous!”

She was also dangerous! Forget darkness, she’s pitch black!

Dinner time that night, I received a message from Ye-Eun.

[It’s weird. My party members aren’t coming in.]

“Unlike our world, their continent might be busy with something. They might have been called to battle or something, so don’t worry too much.”

[Okay, but they aren’t responding to my messages, so I can’t help but worry.]

I told Ye-Eun that she didn’t need to worry that much. The moment we ended our conversation, I realized I was anxious myself. Damn, it seemed Shina was already inside my fencing.

“Haa, I wonder if that princess is okay... I should probably send her a message.

I immediately messaged Shina, but there was no answer. If it was the usual Shina, she would have replied regardless of whether she was sleeping or in the shower, so this was definitely strange.

I was currently in the dungeon's 47th floor. Starting from the 46th floor, the dungeon had become similar to a snowy field. Thanks to my contract with Ruyue, I broke through the 46th floor without much difficulty, and was currently breaking through the 47th floor, while fighting ice worms and frozen penguins. However, once I started being concerned about Shina, the spirit in my spear had lessened. Why did I feel so uneasy? I already knew the answer. It was because I remembered the dream I had.

‘No, it can’t be. A dream is only a dream. Shina’s fine. She has to be.’

When I calmed myself and arrived at the 48th floor, a friend had sent me a message. It wasn’t long, but it was enough to change my heart for the worse.

[Luke continent’s Hero... died. The Demon Lord... took Shina. Shin... what do I do...!?!]

The moment I read the message, I had a hunch. That my peaceful life would soon come to an end.

That the unpreventable change was not only happening on Earth.

Chapter 110. Requirements Of A Dimensional Mercenary (3)

“What... What about you?”

[D-Dungeon. I ran away to the dungeon. Most of the explorers in the battlefield died, and only Shuna and I managed to escape to the dungeon. I’m scared, I can’t go back. E-Even though I’m the crown princess. Even though I have to be at the battlefield...!]

“... And the Demon Lord?”

[He got heavily injured from fighting the Hero before squeezing out the last of his strength and turning everyone into stone. Shina was there. I ran away... while watching everything happen.]

“So Shina isn’t the only one that got captured.”

[Yeah... S-Shin... I, I’m scared. I can’t go back to my world...]

Even over the dungeon’s messages, her trembling voice reached me perfectly. I bit my lips, not knowing what to do. After a bit of pondering, I thought that I needed to see her.

“Where are you?”

[In my house at the Residential Area...]

“Let’s meet first.”

[... Okay.]

I wouldn’t be able to focus on breaking through the dungeon in this situation anyways. I immediately headed to the Residential Area and received her invitation to go to her house.

“...!”

The moment I arrived, Ludia bumped into my chest. No, she had run into my embrace. Thankfully, I wasn’t wearing my armor.

“Ludia...”

“Hic... hic....”

Without bursting out into tears, she eked out whimpers as she stayed in my embrace. I could feel my shirt getting wet from her tears. Flustered, I didn’t know what to do and could only pat her back as she cried. Ludia stayed like that for a few minutes before she calmed down and got off.

“... Sorry.”

Ludia’s eyes were bloodshot from crying. She then sat on the chair without any strength. Her usual self resembled a cat ready to

fight with its hair raised, but she currently looked completely powerless. ‘She must have had no one to turn to if she contacted me...’ For an instant, the absurd thought crossed my mind, but I erased it immediately. I shook my head as if to shake away my delusion and asked her,

“What about Miss Shuna? Is she also in her house?”

“Shuna’s the princess of a small kingdom... she doesn’t have the money. She’s sleeping here for now, but... because she isn’t a family member, I can’t register her. If her vitality hits zero in the dungeon...”

“She’ll go back to the Luka continent.”

“Ut...”

When I said that, Ludia bit her lips. She then covered her face with her hands, and a hot sigh came out between them.

“The Hero died... W-What do I do? The continent’s hope has disappeared. Although the Demon Lord got weakened, it won’t stay weak forever. What about Shina? What about father and mother? Our empire’s people...? They’re only looking at me...!”

“What about the other explorers?”

“Anyone who survived ran away. The Hero was the strongest, but he died. The Demon Lord’s army will finish getting ready soon

and attack. Now is the only time to save Shina... but I can't do it...!"

"Ludia, calm down a little...! Just because the Hero died, it doesn't mean your world is ending."

"It's ending, Shin... If you die, your world will end too."

At her words, I became unable to breathe for an instant.

"What... do you mean?"

"I don't know the exact reason, but that's what everyone says... That if the Hero dies, his world will fall to ruin without doubt... The Hero is the world itself. He is its center and core. As long as the Hero is alive, the world can continue to endure, but it's over when he dies. There's no chance of survival. My continent will no longer...!"

I couldn't hear Ludia's words very well. The world will end if the hero dies? It sounded like a cruel joke. Can't there be another Hero? Can't someone else accept his legacy? Is that why the monsters targeted the Hero? To destroy the world?

Then if I die, Earth will end?

"That's why Heroes bear such heavy weights... That's why they're strong... That's why you're so charming...! Because you need to attract others to you in order to protect yourself... in order

to protect the world...”

I finally understood why my charm stat increased on its own. I didn't want to know, but it was already too late.

I felt like something heavy was pressing down on my shoulders. Was I possessed by a ghost? I tried to make a joke, but it wasn't funny at all.

I began to realize. The daily life Loretta wanted was getting farther away. I was taken aback by the absurdity, and the strength in my body disappeared. I wanted to flop down onto the ground, but I couldn't because of Ludia, who seemed to lack even more energy. I gritted my teeth and put strength into my body. Ludia was looking at me. She was asking me.

“Should I go back? Shin, tell me.”

“I... can't be the one to tell you. What do you want to do, Ludia?”

“I don't know. Don't ask me such a cruel question. I really don't know... No, in truth, I want to run away...!”

There wasn't much I could do to calm down Ludia in her state of panic. However, because the appearance of lifeless dungeon explorers I've been seeing overlapped with the current Ludia, it was hard for me to leave her alone.

“Ludia, I can't give you an answer... but I don't want to see you

die.”

“Do... you...”

Ludia looked at me with a surprised expression. I nodded my head seriously.

“Right. You’re a precious friend, so it’s only normal that I’d worry.”

“...”

Ludia’s face turned red. Because of the state of her emotions, I wasn’t sure how much it changed.

I continued.

“But I know words can’t match actions. Ludia, think carefully. Take the entire day if you need to, and act on it.”

“Are you leaving?”

“Do you want me to stay?”

She seemed to be deep in thought, then mumbled with her mouth closed.

“Stay for one night... no, two hours.”

“... Okay.”

“Closer.”

When I approached her, Ludia grabbed onto my sleeve without a word. I pulled a chair and sat down next to her. I was also confused. I needed time to organize my thoughts.

Ludia seemed to have relaxed after holding onto my sleeve, as she fell asleep with her head down. Her sleeping appearance was extremely lovely, but it didn't enter my eyes.

I contemplated. About me, about the Hero, and about Earth. Starting from how I became the Hero to if the world would really end when the Hero died. I really pondered until my head felt like it would explode. After two hours, I barely managed to arrive at a conclusion. The answer was quite simple.

I wouldn't care.

I never asked anyone to let me be the Hero. I'd just been called Hero before I noticed. People might say, 'you're only strong because you're the Hero!' But to me, it was a load of bull. Plus, just because I was told that my world would end on the event of my death, it didn't mean that I needed to act any differently.

The world will end if I die? What, should I go hide somewhere?

Should I just climb the dungeon without risking myself in Event Raids or Field Dungeons? No, not even over my dead body.

I will do what I want, and no one will stop me. I won't let them. I decided how to live my life. I won't waver because of some nonsense like the world ending if I die. Even if that were true, the world was over for me once I died anyway. Ah, but I still needed to ensure Yua and mother's safety. As for father, he would be fine on his own!

I had worried for nothing. Now that I thought about it, it was simple. In fact, I felt much better now that I had organized my thoughts, and I felt like I knew what to do from now.

First, break through the 48th floor! Then, find out if there's anything I can do for Shina. I had a strong feeling that there was something I could do. Was this also the Hero's ability? Shit, no, I needed to stop thinking about Heroes!

When I got up, Ludia opened her eyes, still half-closed.

She looked at me and slowly asked, "Are you leaving? Don't... leave me alone... Stay with me."

"You have Miss Shuna, Ludia. You're not alone. If you call me later, I'll come running for you. But for now, there's something I need to do."

I imbued mana into my bracelet and equipped my armor. In front

of Ludia, whose eyes opened wide, I closed the visor of my helmet and grinned. Though, she wouldn't be able to see it.

“There has to be a way I can help.”

“... Don't. You can't. You need to protect your own world. Don't involve yourself with other worlds, stupid!”

“Don't misunderstand. It's not just to help you. Shina's also my friend, and I don't like seeing you the way you are. I hate seeing people so helpless. So I'll find a way to help you.”

“I'm not doing this to get you to help me! What I want is something else! It was just your warmth! I don't want to drag you to hell because of me!”

“I know. I also know... that people that aren't seeking help from others are the ones who want help most desperately.”

“No! You're wrong!”

Because she thought it was a hopeless situation, she couldn't so unashamedly reach out for help. However, no matter how hopeless the situation seemed, it might actually be solved easily and simply with the help of others.

That had to be why they existed. I ignored Ludia's shouts and left her house. I thought to myself...

To look into Dimensional Mercenaries.

After breaking through the 48th floor, I arrived at the Floor Shop. Was she surprised that I arrived earlier than she expected? While Loretta was frozen for a moment, I asked what I need to. It was about Dimensional Mercenaries.

Loretta became silent at my question. Then, she asked me with a quiet voice.

“Shin-nim now somewhat knows what kind of an existence the Hero is, right?”

“Yes, to a certain extent.”

“Even so, you’re trying to become a Dimensional Mercenary, whose lives can’t be guaranteed.”

“Yes.”

“The possibility that you’ll die in a dimension other than your own... you’ve considered it, right?”

“No. I won’t die, Loretta. So I haven’t considered it.”

“Really... Nobody can stop you.”

Loretta smiled at my words, then pinched my cheek with a sulking expression.

“I won’t forgive you if you die. I’ll follow you to the ends of hell and bother you, okay?”

“Like I said, I won’t die. So hurry up and tell me about Dimensional Mercenaries.”

“There are many requirements to become a Dimensional Mercenary. First, level. Explorers that aren’t Gold ranked, or level 51, do not have the qualification to become a Dimensional Mercenary. Second, magic. You need the ‘Dimensional Travel’ magic, which serves as the basis of a Dimensional Mercenary, and the ‘Return’ magic, which acts as the safety device to let Dimensional Mercenaries return to their home in any situation. Without any of these magic, you cannot become a Dimensional Mercenary. Third, league. Without having made at least 10 achievements and being at least the incarnation of a god, you cannot become a Dimensional Mercenary. However, Shin-nim has Hermes’ true name and have made many achievements, so you already passed this requirement.

“I’ll become Gold ranked soon, so all I need is the Dimensional Travel magic.”

She grinned and shook her head.

“There are a few ways you can obtain the Dimensional Travel

magic... but there is one simplest, yet most difficult, method. It's to defeat the 50th Floor Master alone."

"Why is that the most difficult? That seems to be the easiest."

"Shin-nim is the only one who would think that."

At Loretta's brusque words, I replied with a vague smile. However, my heart was burning. Dimensional Mercenary! I was only a step away from becoming one! Feeling like fate was guiding me... I felt dirty. However, there was no choice for now. I'd make use of anything I could!

First would be the 50th floor. The day I would become First Dungeon's Gold rank explorer was approaching.

Chapter 111. Requirements Of A Dimensional Mercenary (4)

“The 50th Floor Master is weaker than the Grim Reaper, so I’m sure you can defeat him easily.”

49th Floor Shop. I narrowed my eyes at Loretta’s words.

“I just gave you 50,000 gold for the information on the boss, right?”

“And I told you that you can easily step on that weakling.”

“Who’s the one that said it was the simplest, yet most difficult, method?”

“I meant for the other explorers. There’s no way Shin-nim would lose to that fur ball.”

Loretta spoke as if it was obvious, and lay on the bed she prepared behind the Floor Shop’s counter. Even though she was clearly lying down, a certain part of her was shooting up... I quickly turned my gaze. Thankfully, it seemed Loretta didn’t notice me.

“So hurry up. If your vitality hits zero, you should you won’t be able to save your friend, right?”

“That only adds pressure without helping!”

However, if Loretta said it was easy, it truly was easy. I doubted whether her words were worth 50,000 gold, but considering that she usually gave me huge discounts, I only complained a little before climbing to the 50th floor.

The earlier I could become a Dimensional Mercenary and head to Luka continent, the better it was. The key to victory was to attack the enemy when their forces were weak! When I arrived at the 50th floor, I immediately materialized Ruyue and put a Mana Potion in my mouth.

[Uhuhu, what a wonderful human.]

[Come play with me.]

On the 50th floor, a strange monster other than ice worms, frozen penguins, and frozen bears appeared. It was the snow woman from Japanese folk tale. As I observed them, I wondered if a monster like Korea's dokkaebi would appear on higher floors. They were all wearing white dresses, had long hair, and were showing off their beautiful appearances.

[You defend against the 'charm' status effect.]

[You defend against the 'charm' status effect.]

Even though I didn't do anything, loud alerts were ringing in my ear. I was wondering why they were just standing there, but they were using status effect attacks! For a second, I questioned how father got through this floor and thought I may need to tell mother about it. Then, I pierced the frozen penguins and frozen bears that approached me with my spear.

[That man is strong.]

[Kuk, he didn't fall for my charm? How humiliating!]

[But I, I like that man!]

[The skill, Succubus' Pupils, reflects the status effect back. The snow woman has been charmed.]

[Child, why don't you play with me? Come! Hey, you guys, stop trying to get in my way!]

[Kyak, she's gone crazy! She's attacking us!]

[Her eyes are completely gone! Defend!]

While the snow women were dealing with each other, I leisurely cut down the other monsters, then pierced the snow women

afterward.

[Kuk, you killed us without hesitation!?!]

“Sorry, but appearances don’t shake me anymore.”

Although the snow woman was charmed, it was a status effect. As she wasn’t tamed or anything, the status effect would eventually run out. As such, I killed all the snow women and advanced forward. Although I felt dirty as it felt like I was cutting human beings, I had long since passed the stage where something like that bothered me greatly.

The 46th through 50th floors were made of snowy fields. As such, explorers had to care for the environment along with the monsters they had to fight. However, because of my contract with Ruyue, the environment caused little issue for me. However, the 50th floor was strange. It became colder the further I walked.

[Shin, are you okay? I’ll try harder!]

“No, Ruyue. I don’t think it’s your fault.”

Was it because of the battle room where the Floor Master was waiting...? Or was it some other reason? I tightened my grip on Gluttony Spear. For an instant, a chill swept over us. If I, who contracted Ruyue, could feel chill, it only made one thing.

[The blood on your spear. It comes from us snow women.]

“Are you the snow woman captain?”

I raised my spear and aimed it in the sky. Thousands and thousands of black hair filled the sky, like the night had just arrived on the snowy field. Floating in the center was an incredibly gorgeous woman.

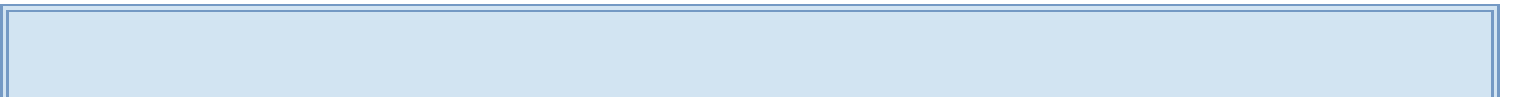
[Conceited Human who dreams of land beyond this place, I will collect my fellow snow women’s cost of blood... Kuk!]

‘Sorry, but I don’t have time to be listening to you monsters!’ Using Divine Speed, I ran forward and drilled my spear into the snow woman’s chest with Heroic Strike. Divine Speed, which multiplied my speed, had greater effect the faster I was. As my speed had increased 45% by now, I moved like I was teleporting when I used Divine Speed. A mere 50th floor named monster could not block my attack.

[Kuk... s-strong... you, Her....!]

“Sorry, I don’t have time to listen to your last words either.”

I slashed her neck without a shred of hesitation. A small fanfare rang out, indicating that I had killed a named monster. Before that, however, a message that alerted the increase of my skill level rang out.



[Divine Speed became level 6. By using 15% of your mana, your speed is multiplied by 700% for 1 second.]

“Divine Speed’s become level 6 now...”

700% for 1 second. With my basic 45% speed increase, I could move for 1015% of my speed when I activated Divine Speed. Perhaps I should focus more on my Divine Speed skill. In any case, I had received something in my inventory.

[You obtained Snow Woman’s Breath-imbued Ice Crystal (Unique).]

[Snow Woman’s Breath-imbued Ice Crystal (Unique)]

Consumable item

Activatable by hitting the target with it. Completely ignores the target’s resistance and freezes the target. After 5 seconds, the target may become unfrozen, depending on the resistance.]

As it seemed like a complete cheat item, I enshrined it in my inventory and kowtowed to it. Then, I walked to the Floor Master battle room with vigor. The temperature had also gone back to normal, so I was able to arrive at my destination in just a few hours

without much trouble.

The door was made out of ice. I could feel a large, ferocious aura leaking out from it. It seemed to be giving a warning, as if I shouldn't think about challenging it alone.

I slammed open the door without any hesitation.

“Fight me!”

[Guooooooooo!]

The Floor Master room did not betray theme of 46th through 50th floor, as it was also a snowy field. I saw trees and boulders covered in snow, and even the ceiling was missing, as snow was falling from the wide-open sky.

Most importantly, I saw the large creature roaring from beyond the hill in the distance. It was a giant that was at least 7 meters in size. It had desiccated skin pulled tightly over its bones, pale ash gray skin, and a large head that did not match its body. Its eyes were pushed back deep into their sockets. Looking at its bloody lips, I realized what it was.

“Wendigo!”

It was a creature of legends from Canadian and American Indians' folklore. It was known for its cannibalistic nature. Was there a well-known method of fighting him?

No.

[Guoooooooo!]

The Wendigo charged at me with an incredible speed. Although it was gaunt, its large size was enough to shake the earth and cause snow to fall from the snowy mountain.

I fixed my grip on my spear and glanced at him from top to bottom. Where was the most effective place for me to attack? What kind of special abilities would it have? What were its weapons?

“Hu, first, let’s fight! Thunder Spear!”

Peika, who was getting stronger by the day, created a spear of lighting in the air, sending it flying toward the Wendigo. Surprisingly, the lightning spear struck its forehead. The Wendigo’s evasive ability was crap! Only it’s running speed was fast.

[Guoooooooo!]

“Come!”

I also rushed forward on Ruyue. I had first met Ruyue in a snowy field! She could bring out her ability to the fullest in this environment. Her speed became faster and faster, and when we

neared the Wendigo, she had long passed the Wendigo's speed.

[Guooooooooo!]

The surrounding mana began to shake when I neared him. At the same time, frost appeared on my armor. In other words, it had an absurd ability of freezing anyone that approached it!

[Auuuuuuuu!]

However, it had met the wrong opponent. Ruyue was an ice elemental! As the Wendigo poured out more freezing energy, Ruyue became bigger and her energy became stronger. The frost that bloomed on my armor had also disappeared before I noticed it.

[I feel full of strength! Why are you giving me strength?]

[Guooooooooo!]

The Wendigo seemed to be flustered when we weren't frozen, as it raised its large arms and swung them down toward us. However, it was my turn to attack him.

“Ruyue, can you focus on defense? Peika, we're going full strength!”

[Okay!]

[Understood, Master!]

I decreased the amount of mana I gave to Ruyue, and poured more into my spear, which Peika was infused in. Wendigo's large face was glaring at me. Its arms missed me and hit the ground, creating a small snowstorm around us, but I calmly stared back at its face.

[Guooooo...!]

“Sorry, but I don't have the time to play with you slowly. I'm in a hurry, you see.”

I smiled. The spear I held became a white bolt of lightning and radiated dazzling light in the completely white snowy area. It pierced the Wendigo's eye and became even bigger.

“So let's wrap this up! Dark Thunder Explosion!”

Before it could see the white aura in my spear and say, ‘What, this guy was the Hero?’, I went all out.

Enjoy this festival of lighting strengthened by the power of a lightning elemental!

B-B-B-B-Boom!

[Kuaaaaaaaa!]

Admiring the Wendigo's scream, I continued with White Lightning Consecutive Strike. My goal was its right arm! The best way to deal with large monsters was to disable their limbs one by one. With that, not only would they be unable to attack me, their HP and resistance would also decrease, making it easy for me to cut their heads off. It was something I learned from fighting the Giant Wolf.

[Guaaaaaa!]

“I! Won't! Stop! Hitting! Until! You! Die! White Lightning Consecutive Strike!”

In exactly 26 minutes since I entered the Floor Master battle room, the Wendigo fell helplessly without even using all of its abilities. It had ended so quickly that it did not even use even one of Floor Master-specific skills. This guy was just too weak...

[You became level 51. You obtained the qualification to advance to the 51st floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[You became Gold Rank 9. You became a Gold ranked explorer! You can now appoint an additional person to be an explorer. You can strengthen your current class and you can obtain another subclass!]

[Amazing! You are the first in First Dungeon's history to succeed in soloing the Wendigo on the first try! The dungeon will remember you as a Great Explorer. You obtained 2 skill point as reward. You can choose god's true name that matches your league! Current skill points: 20]

[Your league of existence became higher, strengthening Hermes's authority. Talaria's duration increases to 30 minutes per day. You obtained a new authority of Hermes, Caduceus.]

[You obtained the title, 'Wendigo Master.' All stats increase by 2. This effect will apply even if the title is not equipped.]

[You defeated the Wendigo alone. You obtained the special reward, 'Wendigo's Fur Hat.']

[You obtained 250,000 gold.]

[You received the only reward left hidden for the First Explorer. Congratulations! Your luck stat increases by 1.]

[Secret. Dimensional Travel Magic Book]

[You can choose one of two god's true names. Choose the desired true name: The God of Thunder, Thor, or the Sky God Zeus. Once chosen, you cannot obtain the other's true name, so choose carefully!]

... Eh? What was that?

“... A new god’s true name!?”

Chapter 112. Requirements Of A Dimensional Mercenary (5)

[The two gods are very prideful. Hesitation is not allowed with their true names on the line! If you don't make your decision in the next 10 seconds, you will miss your opportunity to obtain either name!]

“W-Woah! Let me get out of here first!”

No, no matter how fast I was, there wasn't enough time to ask Loretta! Damn it! Should I choose Thor, known for his strength? Or Should I choose Zeus, known as the king of the gods? Damn, without any knowledge of the dungeon, I didn't know which was better in the long run! No choice, I'll flip a coin! Heads will be Thor, and tails will be...!

“It's tails! Zeus!”

[You obtained the true name of Sky God Zeus! As you've already adapted to the true name of Hermes, you can adapt to Zeus' power more quickly.]

[The God of Thunder, Thor, is shocked that you did not choose his true name. Gods close to him have begun to observe you.]

[Your strength and charm increase by 15%. All stats increase by 5. Affinity to all elements increases. Additionally, your affinity to the lightning element increases greatly.]

[Your body seethes with magic. Your magic increases by 20!]

[Once per day, you can use 'Sky God's Play.' While Sky God's Play is active, you can freely transform into anything you have seen with your eyes and will 'absolutely' not be discovered. You will still maintain your abilities, but equipment effects cannot be used if they are unequipped. The skill will last for one hour.]

[Once per month, you can use 'Sky God's Rage.' You can manifest Zeus' lightning bolt of punishment, forged by Hephaestus and the Cyclopes, into your weapon. Its power is absolute and may even slay a god, but when the lightning bolt is used against an unsuitable opponent, you will have to pay the price of your actions.]

I became dizzy and couldn't help but kneel in place. My body was unbearably hot. Pzzt. A spark flickered from my body. Kuk, it was painful... It was incomparable to the feeling of leveling up. It felt like someone was forcefully pulling on me. I, who was confined in a small and narrow body, was being spread out into a bigger and wider realm. All my energies were going wild in all directions. Although I couldn't perceive it before, because Hermes' power had gotten stronger, it was even worse.

'I see, so this is what Loretta meant...!'

In the past, when I obtained Hermes' power, she was relieved that it wasn't the true name of a god related to battle, war or violence. She said I wouldn't have been able to handle it. Now, I fully understood what she meant.

If it was the past me, my vitality would have hit zero the moment I received Zeus' true name and I would have been kicked out of the dungeon. I might have even received heavy injuries after returning to Earth. Zeus' power was that fierce, large, and violent.

For the next few dozens of minutes, I circulated Peruta Circuit with my hands on the ground, trying to adapt to Zeus' power. Although the wild energies around me raved without yielding to Peruta Circuit, the more I circulated Peruta Circuit, the more they began to listen to me. I felt relieved and finally became stable enough to read the messages I had gotten.

First, Zeus' transformation ability and lightning. The transformation ability seemed to have countless uses. As for the lightning, although it had a tricky condition and could be used only once per month, its power was undoubtedly something I could look forward to. Not to mention, since it was a lightning attribute attack, it could be amplified with Peika's power. It suited me perfectly.

Next were the effects of Zeus' true name. The increase to all stats was the same as Hermes' effect, but the 15% strength increase was astounding. Just like the Hermes title increased the speed of my body by 15%, the Zeus title increased the strength in all my movements by 15%. It was incomparable to my strength stat

increasing by some amount. With this and the other abilities I received...

Couldn't I call myself an SS-ranker?

When the thought crossed my mind, my heart began to pound. It was possible. With Zeus' true name, the amount of mana I had shot up and my affinity to lightning increased to the point that my Elementalist powers could not keep up with it. Fighting with Ruyue previously, I felt that my connection with Ruyue was deeper than my connection with Peika, but it seemed it was instantly reversed.

I could feel with my body that Peika's destructive power had increased significantly. As I was now, I felt like I could deal a critical blow to Brightman, that lovable bastard.

"No, first, I have to save Shina..."

Don't rush it. I didn't have to hurry to beat up Brightman. Not to mention, I wasn't completely sure I could win against him. Plus, I wasn't sure if Brightman was evil enough that Sky God's lightning would work on him. No, since he tried to kill me, he had attempted murder. Maybe it would work on him?

I cooled my vengeful mind and focused on Peruta Circuit. While reading the rest of the messages, I found something strange.

"Charm? Why did my charm increase?"

A thought then flashed in my mind. Zeus was known for cheating on his wife Hera and having children with other women. Was that why my charm increased...? Doubtful, I held my spear blade up and looked at my reflection. Thankfully, I didn't look or feel any different. I found it absurd that I was even considering it, but I would be troubled if any more girls said they liked me. My head was already a mess from Loretta and Ye-Eun.

‘Next is... Dimensional Travel.’

The reward for Wendigo's first achievement, Dimensional Travel Magic Book! Its name clearly revealed its identity. I picked up the magic book without much thought, and in that instant, I felt a new power being vested in me, along with a tingling sensation. If obtaining Zeus' power felt like standing on a hill where lightning fell like rain, the feeling from just now was like dunking my feet into icy water.

[You learned Dimensional Travel magic. Once every three months, you can travel to the dimension of someone on your friend list. Once used, you cannot use this magic again during the cooldown period no matter what. It is recommended that you prepare a precautionary measure. The number of people you can bring with you increases and the cooldown time decreases with skill level.]

[You can become a Dimensional Mercenary. Ask the Residential Area administrators for more info!]

Yes! I clenched my fists. I obtained the qualifications to become a Dimensional Mercenary too easily! Plus, I had even received unexpected powers. Although I told myself not to get overconfident, I couldn't calm down. It was dangerous. Was it because Hermes' power and Zeus' power were going wild? This damned sense of omnipotence wasn't disappearing, even though it wasn't my real self that got stronger!

Now that I thought about it, I had not even checked Hermes' new power, Caduceus. I checked the description for Caduceus and my eyes opened wide.

This was... a cheat!

I left the Floor Master room. I wanted to report to Loretta about obtaining a new god's true name, about the class upgrade for becoming Gold Ranked and also about the additional subclass I could obtain. However, when Loretta saw me, she acted strangely. The moment she looked at me, she slowly got up from her bed, then let out a short sigh. Then, she approached me.

“... Huu.”

“Loretta?”

“Shin-nim, tell me straight out. What happened to you?”

“L-Loretta? I should be asking what happened to you! Why are

you approaching me?”

“Tell me quickly. My self-control as the Elf Queen is being disrupted. Keep in mind that this is not normal.”

As she directly said her self-control was being disrupted, Loretta was approaching me with the eyes of a beast following its prey!

“Come on, tell me. We’re both going to be too busy to listen in a bit, so I want to at least hear what happened before I completely lose my reason.”

“No! You sound like you’re more than capable of maintaining your reason! What do you mean we’ll be too busy to listen!? What are you trying to do!?”

This woman, she lost it! For a moment, I considered using Orc Lord’s Warcry. Thankfully, after Loretta had forcefully taken off my armor, I managed to bring her back to reality with a full-force whack on her head.

“Huk! What did I just do?”

“Don’t hold onto my collar as you say that! Let go!”

“No, since we’ve already come this far...”

“Do you need me to hit you again?”

“Tsk, you coward.”

“Loretta, that’s enough. It’s really scary.”

“So? How are you emitting so much charm that you can even pierce my mental defense? It’s even continuous and not a one-shot.”

I told Loretta everything that happened. Her expression when I told her I got a second god’s true name was quite a sight. When I told her I chose Zeus between Thor and Zeus, she let out a long sigh.

“That’s good... I’m relieved.”

“Is Thor that bad?”

“Yes. Objectively speaking, he falls a step behind Zeus. If you obtained Thor’s true name, you might have gotten stronger in the short term, but that would be it. In the long run, Zeus’ true name will be several times stronger. Olympian gods are generally above Asgardian gods. It’s because they are immortal.”

“Ah...!”

Right. Gods from Greek Mythology were immortal. However, gods from Norse Mythology were fated to die from Ragnarok, and

only a small number of gods survived Ragnarok. So the fates of the gods from mythologies affected their power...

“You did well. You just have to continue like that. Here’s a question. If Shin-nim had the opportunity to choose between Odin and Ares’ true name, whose should you choose?”

“Ares, right?”

“No, it’s Odin.”

“Why!?”

“Because the kings of gods are different. How can you compare Ares and Odin? Shin-nim already has Hermes and Zeus’ true name. If you get another chance to choose between two gods’ true names, you need to thoroughly compare their abilities and affinity to you. Ah, this doesn’t mean Shin-nim can obtain Odin’s true name. There’s already an explorer who has Odin’s true name...”

“... Loretta?”

Loretta’s complexion turned dark for a moment, so I couldn’t help but call out her name. At my worried call, Loretta raised her head and smiled.

“Alright, next was... your class?”

“... Yes.”

My main class as an Elementalist could be strengthened. I thought it was like the 2nd class advancement in games. However, just like how there were requirements for one to get their 2nd class advancement in games, there were requirements I had to fulfill to advance my Elementalist class. The biggest requirement was my skills. Regarding this, Loretta said I didn't need to be impatient, as my ability would automatically improve when the requirements were met.

More important was the subclass. According to Loretta, explorers did not get many chances to obtain subclasses. As such, we had to try to get them when we could. As such, I chose Tamer as my second subclass.

[You obtained the 'Tamer' subclass. Your charm and luck increase by 10 through the class advancement bonus.]

[You obtained the class active skill, 'Taming.' Taming is based on your charm. The higher the skill level, the higher your charm, the more weakened your target is and the greater the disparity between you and your target's strength, the higher your chance of success will be. The chance of success also increases if your target is the opposite sex. When Taming succeeds, you can command your target as a subordinate, and you can completely turn your target into your follower by deepening the bond and giving the target a name.]

[You obtained the class passive skill, 'Spirit of the Tamer.' It

becomes easier to alleviate your target's hostility and to increase their disposition towards you. The potency and number of tamable targets increase with skill levels. Current tamable targets: 2]

[Your tamed subordinates can accompany you in Event Dungeons and the normal dungeon. However, your subordinates cannot come back to life once they die, so be careful.]

Feeling the Tamer's power being vested in me, I opened my eyes. I had made all the preparations that I could. I took care of the matter with the Floor Master, the god's true name, and my new subclass. All that was left to do was to become a Dimensional Mercenary. When I was about to head to the Residential Area, Loretta grabbed my shoulders. Her eyes were flashing fearfully.

"Where are you going in that state?"

"Huh? Why?"

"You need to do something about that charming aura. If you go out like this, you'll bring about a total calamity."

That's probably not right. Because Loretta liked me... Though it was a bit embarrassing to say, it was because Loretta saw me favorably that she went crazy. However, no matter what I said, Loretta would not let go. In the end, I gave up.

“Okay! Fine, I’ll do it!”

Just like that, I had to take 30 minutes out of my busy schedule to learn how to conceal my charm. Like the old saying went, good news always came with bad news!

Chapter 113. Requirements Of A Dimensional Mercenary (6)

30 minutes later, I headed to the Residential Area's trading center with Loretta, who was too worried to send me alone. At the trading center, I saw a hobgoblin looking over documents as always. Explorers moved busily, trying to sell their items directly or through auctions and also registering themselves on the noticeboard. Feeling the numerous gazes that fell on us the moment we appeared, I walked toward the trading center's administrator.

“Oh if it isn't Kang Shin! ... And Guild Master?”

The one in charge of the trading center today wasn't Meladel, but Eladel. Although I couldn't really tell them apart, Loretta was there to whisper to me.

“She's linking arms with Kang Shin.... Hu, right. I remember.”

“Hello, Eladel. I'm sorry, but there's something I'd like to ask.”

As he was grinning while looking at Loretta, I turned his attention toward me.

“Are you two getting married?”

“Yeah, we're doing it now!”

“No, we’re not!”

At the word ‘married,’ Loretta became overly excited and pulled on my arm. I flicked her head lightly and calmed her down.

“I want to become a Dimensional Mercenary.”

“... You, aren’t you a Hero?”

“Yes. I know what a Hero is too. I want to become a Dimensional Mercenary.”

“That’s... something I can’t recommend. A Hero working as a Dimensional Mercenary... I’ve never heard of it before. Although Dimensional Mercenaries work in a certain degree of safety, if you, a Hero of a world, dies in another world...”

“I won’t die. Plus, imagining myself with a collar on my neck just because I’m a Hero gives me goosebumps. If you say no, I’ll give up being a Hero.”

“If it’s something you can give up so easily, Heroes wouldn’t have agonized for such a long time...”

“Eladel, do as he says. Shin-nim has the right to do as he wishes, and you don’t have the right to stop him.”

Loretta bluntly spoke to Eladel who seemed to be hesitating. Perhaps Loretta followed me because she knew Eladel would be troubled at my request.

“Guild Master... Is that what you think?”

“Yes. It’s not like Shin-nim asked to be the Hero. Plus, Shin-nim said he would be a Dimensional Mercenary. Dimensional Mercenaries are existences that both the dungeon and worlds need. As dangerous as it is, the reward is also big. We should respect Shin-nim’s courage.”

“Even if you say that, being a Dimensional Mercenary is dangerous. I can only see his courage as foolish. ... You, are you not projecting someone else onto him?”

“Do you want to die, Eladel?”

Startled, I unlinked Loretta’s arms from mine. I felt that Loretta had said something that didn’t suit her in the slightest. The Loretta just now did not seem like the Loretta I knew. I couldn’t stay still, as she seemed too unfamiliar. I could tell that Eladel’s body also froze when he heard her.

When I was about to instinctively distance myself from Loretta, she had gone back to her smiling face. It was the Loretta that I knew.

“Don’t say such a cruel joke. There’s no way I can compare Shin-

nim with anyone.”

“I-It was my bad, Guild Master.”

“Don’t say that from now on, okay?”

“Yes.”

As Eladel answered, still trembling from before, Loretta linked her arm back onto mine tightly, as if to prevent me from running away. I hesitated a little, then softly stroked her arm.

Loretta was Loretta. She had things she didn’t want to tell me and appearances she didn’t want to show me. Without a doubt, some of them would provoke a certain degree of repulsion from me. However, the Loretta that didn’t know what to do because I had discovered it was the Loretta I knew.

“I won’t run away, so you don’t have to grab onto me so strongly.”

“... Really?”

Loretta turned toward me and asked with worrying eyes. I lightly smiled and nodded my head.

“Of course.”

“Then do you want to go to the wedding hall like this?”

“No.”

“Tsk.”

After confirming that I had met the requirements to become a Dimensional Mercenary, becoming one was easy. I just had to submit an application.

[You became a Dimensional Mercenary! You can now accept requests and receive rewards as a Dimensional Mercenary!]

When I was blankly listening to the message that I had become a Dimensional Mercenary, Eladel gave me an additional explanation.

“In the First Dungeon, there are currently 57 active Dimensional Mercenaries. You will, of course, become the youngest of them. Dimensional Mercenaries can accept requests from the Residential Area’s request noticeboard.”

“Where do requests come from?”

“Most of the time, an explorer in need of Dimensional Mercenaries submits a request application to the administrative guild, and if the guild see that it is appropriate, the request will appear on the noticeboard. Then, any Dimensional Mercenary can

accept the request. In some cases, the requests come from the dungeon. In this case, the job will be extremely difficult, so you'll have to be prudent when accepting such requests."

"What about the rewards?"

"Isn't it obvious? Depending on the results and the level of one's contribution, the dungeon will provide gold, stat points, skill points, skills, or magic. You can even obtain special equipment. There are also cases where the requester gives additional rewards as thanks."

The rewards were indeed attractive, especially the stat points and skill points. I could see why others worked as Dimensional Mercenaries. I then asked.

"What happens if you give up and return?"

"Simple. You won't be able to accept another request for half a year. It's the duration of Dimensional Travel's cooldown time."

Dimensional Travel's cooldown time was half a year? Mine was undoubtedly half of that, three months. Plus, the cooldown time would decrease when the skill level went up. It was then that I remembered that I was the first explorer to defeat Wendigo alone on my first try. That was probably where the difference came from.

That said, didn't that mean there was practically no penalty?

“That’s it?”

“Remember this, Kang Shin. Dimensional Mercenaries are in a dominant position over the requesters. They’re only working to get the skills and stats the dungeon will provide. Unless the requester provides an extremely attractive reward, they will do as they want.”

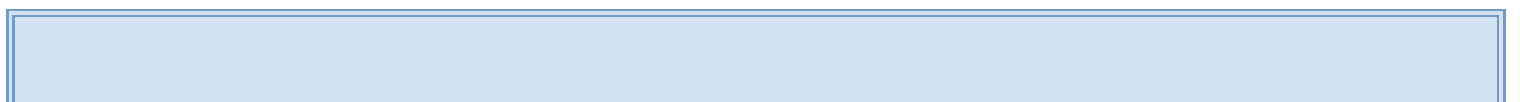
Feeling my image of Dimensional Mercenaries as superheroes shattering, I continued.

“One last thing. How do I check the requests?”

“As long as you’re within the Residential Area, you can call the request noticeboard at any time and check it there. That’s also a special right given to Dimensional Mercenaries.”

With that, I had heard everything I wanted to. I nodded my head, thanking him, then immediately opened the request noticeboard. Ludia most likely did not put in a request. However, Ludia and Shuna couldn’t be the only survivors of Luka continent.

As I thought, there was a recent request by a Luka continent explorer. After reading it, I nodded my head. The contents matched what I hoped to do. To save the Luka continent’s kidnapped princess.



[If you accept the request, you will arrive at the Ehuir Empire. Upon completing the request, you can take any item from the Imperial Palace's treasure vault. I, Ehuir Empire's Kiros Knight Commander Bellode, promise. The Demon Lord has been gravely injured by the Hero, so I can guarantee that you will not need to fight the Demon Lord. However, you may need to fight high ranking demons, so only those confident in their abilities should come. On the day of Pallia, six in the afternoon, we will depart together.]

Reading the request, I took a deep breath, then accepted it.

[You accepted Bellode Iraus' request. Including you, 12 Dimensional Mercenaries have accepted the request so far.]

I was relieved. Perhaps it was because they did not need to fight the Demon Lord, but quite a few Dimensional Mercenaries had accepted the request! Of course, if the situation became dangerous, they would leave Luka continent, but I was relieved that there was still so many of them. With a cheery voice, I messaged Ludia.

“Ludia, I became a Dimensional Mercenary. I'm going to your continent to save Shina.”

[Stupid, it's dangerous! Don't come!]

“... Don't come? Don't tell me, you...?”

Ludia answered after a bit of silence.

[Right. I returned to the Luka continent.]

“You...!”

[Even if my world will collapse, I can't just stay still when my sister's been kidnapped. If I run, I won't be able to live a proper life... so I'm going to go save Shina.]

It seemed she had already made up her mind. Although she was trembling after the Hero fell, she was now burning, as if she was prepared to die. Not looking after her own safety was foolish, yet it was incredibly beautiful and worthy of respect. Rather than being touched, however, my sense of unease was greater. It was becoming more and more like the situation from my dream.

I asked.

“Are your parents fine?”

[Yeah, they're both armed, fighting against the invading demons with the empire's knights and magicians. After all, they're both First Dungeon explorers.]

“That's the first time I heard about that, but that's good to hear.”

It seemed not everything was like my dream. A dream was a dream. Not everything from it could be the truth. After all...

“The Ludia from my dream had big breasts...”

[T-They’re going to get bigger! I’m still growing! Plus, the size of my breasts has nothing to do with you! N-Nothing at all! Not even a little!]

Ah, I accidentally sent that as a message! But Ludia, I don’t think there’s any chance that your breasts will get any bigger... In any case, I raised my voice to cover my mistake.

“Anyways, I’m going. Let me help you.”

[Don’t come! If it’s doable with just you, then it’s fine even if you’re not here! And if we’re going to fail... You being there won’t make it a success...]

“No, I’m coming. I can’t leave you alone.”

It seemed Ludia was still underestimating me. I had many trump cards in my arsenal. I doubted I could do anything against the Demon Lord, but I at least had ways to turn the battlefield around completely.

However, Ludia didn’t respond.

“... Ludia?”

[Uk! You stupid! I’m Ehuir Empire’s crown princess. No one’s going to leave me alone! Y-You’re self-conscious!]

Her voice was shaking slightly as she responded. I may have made her angry. Even so, I had no intention of backing down.

“I’ll be there soon, wait for me.”

[You can come if you want to come so much! It’s not my problem if you die though. I don’t care about your world at all!]

After shouting, Ludia hung up. I grinned and checked my equipment. Next to me, Loretta was standing there with worried eyes.

“If it gets dangerous, you have to use Return without hesitation, okay?”

“Of course.”

“Do you have enough potions? You might have to sleep outside, so should I let you borrow my bed?”

“You want me to sleep outside on a bed? It’s fine. I have a sleeping bag and tent in my inventory.”

“Are you missing anything? You should check one more time.”

“Ah, now that you mention it.”

There was something I decided to do before I left. Since I didn't know what would happen, I wanted to make myself as strong as possible. There was one thing I could do now.

It was to raise my skill levels.

Chapter 114. Avarice Devours Everything (1)

Using skill points, I could raise the level of a skill by 1. According to Loretta, however, every time you used skill points to increase the level of a skill, you would need double the amount of skill points the next time you wanted to raise its level.

It may not seem like a big deal, but it was. The first time it would be 1 skill point, but it would then be 2, 4, 8 and so on. To raise a single skill by 5 levels, you would need 31 skill points. As such, I had decided to save them for when I felt my growth was stunted.

Of course, now was an exception. I currently had 20 skill points. Even if I needed to exhaust them, I needed to make myself stronger.

“First, one into spear technique.”

My spear technique recently became high-rank level 6. With one point, it would become high-rank level 7.

[Spear Technique skill became high-rank level 7! External mana will naturally flow into your attacks without the use of your own mana. The chance of critical hits increases greatly when stabbing with your spear.]

[As you forcefully raised your level of attainment with a skill point, it may take some time for your body to adapt to the skill level.]

I felt like my body was being pressed strongly, like someone was trying to forcefully stuff me with the concept of getting stronger. To be honest, it wasn't a good feeling. If possible, I wanted to rely on my own strength to increase my spear technique levels...

“No, I just need to completely learn it with my body.”

Perhaps it was the flaw of using skill points. I got the feeling that I couldn't fully utilize the power of my high-rank level 7 spear technique. Like it said, it seemed I needed some time to adapt. I fell deep into thought. I originally wanted to master my spear technique, but if it was like this, there was no meaning to mastering my spear technique with skill points.

This sense of unfamiliarity and distance would only increase if I raised my spear technique level more, and it would take even longer for me to adapt to the level of attainment a true spear technique master should have. I would at least be unable to fully utilize the power of a spear technique master during the request.

In that case, it was probably better to raise other skill levels. Otherwise, the results might be worse than throwing away the skill points.

I wanted to raise my Elemental Contract skill to contract another elemental, but my Elemental Contract skill was currently mid-rank level 4. Even if I used all my skill points, I could not bring it up to level 9. As such, this was not the best idea.

I had to think of another method. A skill that could have immediate effects with increased skill level, something that I did not need to adapt to... A thought then flashed in my mind like lightning.

Divine Speed.

“Alright, one for now.”

[Divine Speed became level 7. When used, it uses 14% of your mana to multiply your speed by 750% for 1.5 seconds.]

“Huk.”

No way. At level 6, it multiplied my speed by 700% for 1 second. The increase was just too big. Plus, just like I thought, this skill didn't take time for me to adapt to it! This was it! As if I was possessed by something, I continued to use my skill points.

[Divine Speed became level 8. When used, it uses 13% of your mana to multiply your speed by 800% for 2 seconds.]

[Divine Speed became level 9. When used, it uses 12% of your

mana to multiply your speed by 900% for 2.5 seconds.]

With the point I used to raise my spear technique level, I had used 8 skill points so far. I still had 12 left. I only needed 8 skill points to master Divine Speed. There was no need to hesitate. I could clearly see the shocking increase every time the skill level went up. I then used 8 skill points on Divine Speed.

[You mastered Divine Speed. When used, it uses 10% of your mana to multiply your speed by 1,000% for 3 seconds. Your affinity to the wind element increases greatly!]

I let out a long sigh. Using 10% of my mana to multiply my speed by 1,000% for 3 seconds. It was worth, no, more than worth the skill points I had spent. Plus, mastering it also raised my affinity to the wind element greatly!

“This... This might even be stronger than all of my other abilities combined.”

I had a 145% base speed increase, which became 1,450% when multiplied by 10. With Divine Speed, the destructive power of my attacks would not be as simple as my speed increasing. Of course, it would be difficult for me to adapt to the speed that was 14.5 times faster. My opponent might have a defense skill or a skill that increased their own speed, so I couldn't say this skill would be invincible.

Even so, it was clear that this skill would become one of my main skills. It would let me output an overwhelming destructive force, and if it only used 10% of my mana, I would be able to use it without much burden.

Alright, now I had 4 points left. First, I put a point into Peruta Circuit. I suspected that it was similar to spear technique in that putting another point in was discouraged.

[Peruta Circuit became level 6! You can more easily maintain Peruta Circuit during battle. Your circulation speed increases and draws in more mana. While Peruta Circuit is active, rotational force will be added to all your movements, greatly increasing their destructive power.]

[As you forcefully raised your level of attainment with a skill point, it may take some time for your body to adapt to the skill level.]

As expected, it was hard to say Peruta Circuit had grown completely. I had the feeling I was wearing armor that didn't fit me.

That said, there was a clear difference between level 5 and level 6 Peruta Circuit. It became easier to gather mana during combat and rotational force would be added to all movements. I realized why Peruta was so proud of this technique. It even made me consider raising its skill level again.

However, I held myself back. Whether Peruta Circuit or my spear technique, any more would make it hard for me to handle their change. I was afraid that it might even harm my techniques.

Most importantly, there was a skill I wanted to raise with the remaining skill points.

[Soul Guard became level 4. Your soul's league grows higher, making you unfazed by standard mental attacks.]

[Soul Guard became level 5. Your soul's league grows higher, making you overwhelm others naturally and giving you a small resistance against mental and even magical attacks. The chance of receiving critical hits decreases.]

“Huhu, it really is an amazing skill.”

I still wasn't confident in my mental defenses. What I had to watch out for the most in Luka continent weren't things I could not handle with my physical ability, but mental attacks! Of course, if I could completely adapt to spear technique or Peruta Circuit, I would have chosen one to put all my skill points into, but that wasn't the case. As such, I decided to increase my Soul Guard skill.

The result was more than satisfactory. I didn't think I would even get resistance against magical attacks. As expected of a secret

reward. Confirming that my choice hadn't been wrong, I checked my stats with all the changes.

[Name: Kang Shin Race: Human Sex: Male

Class: Elementalist (Sub – Skill Collector, Tamer) Title: Zeus
Rank: Gold 9

Level: 51

HP – 27,650/27,650 MP – 21,860/21,860

Strength – 149(+81) Dexterity – 140(+49) Constitution – 129(+51)

Intelligence – 32(+44) Magic – 131(+69) Charm – 87(+84) Luck – 39(+34)

Normal Skills – High-rank Martial Arts (Lv 4), High-rank Spear Technique (Lv 7), Low-rank Crossbow Marksmanship (Lv 9), Low-rank Gale Track (Lv 2), Mid-rank White Lightning Consecutive Strike (Lv 3), Mid-rank Heroic Strike (Lv 8), Mid-rank Provoke (Lv 6), Divine Speed (Master), Return (Lv 4), Heavy Armor Mastery (Lv 3), Mid-rank Dash (Lv 4), Peruta Circuit (Lv 6), Soul Guard (Lv 5), Dimensional Travel (Lv 1), Deific Manifestation, Death Counter, Riding

Class Skills – Mid-rank Spirit Mastery (Lv 7), Mid-rank Spirit Aura (Lv 4), Mid-rank Elemental Control (Lv 4), Mid-rank Elemental Contract (Lv 4), Mid-rank Elemental Blade (Lv 2), Mid-rank Elemental Tempest (Lv 4), Thunder Beast (Lv 2).

Subclass Skill – Endow Skill, Taming (Lv 1), Spirit of the

Collector, Spirit of the Tamer (Lv 1)]

[Equipment:

Golden Teardrop (Intelligence +5, Magic +5, Charm +15. Can use Succubus' Pupils.)

Blood Succubus' Earring (Magic +15, Intelligence +5, Charm +20. Emits a scent that easily attracts members of the opposite sex.)

Flesh Golem's Second Finger (Strength +7, Constitution +7. Can use Regeneration.)

Crimson Dragon Scale Armor (All stats +10, Strength +10, Dexterity +10. Effect of Charge type skills +60%. Can use Crimson Roar.)

Red Dragon Felixes' Cape (Dexterity +15, Magic +15, Charm +15. Immune to temperature-based status effects. Three times a day, it protects its master from unforeseen attacks.)

Crimson Gluttony Spear (Strength +30, Fire damage added to all basic attacks, Can inflict burn status effect.)]

[Tattoo:

Giant Wolf's Tattoo (Speed +30%, Attack power of charge type skills +50%)]

[Collector's Pocket Watch:

- 1 o'clock: Orc Lord's Warcry
- 2 o'clock: Vengeful Spirit's Wail
- 3 o'clock: Dark Thunder Explosion
- 4 o'clock: Dragon Skin
- 5 o'clock: Diehard
- 6 o'clock: Undead Roar
- 7 o'clock: Outburst
- 8 o'clock: Shadow Blink
- 9 o'clock: Gigantic]

[3 Event Dungeon clears, 2 Event Raid clear, accumulated bonus stats: 7]

[Current skill points: 0]

[Thirteen title-effects: (Orc Lord Slayer, Wraith Queen Slayer, Dark Ratman Slayer, Giant Ghoul Slayer, Skeleton Knight Slayer, Dullahan Slayer, Lizard Knight Master, Grim Reaper Master, Giant Wolf Master, Wendigo Master, Hermes, Zeus). Accumulated effects: All stats +24, Speed +15%, Strength +15%, Charm +15%, Critical hit rate x2 against skeleton-type monsters, Critical damage +50% against opponents with bones, increased affinity to all elements x2, affinity to the wind element greatly increased, affinity to the lightning elemental greatly increased, can summon Talaria once per day, can summon Caduceus once per month, can use Sky God's Play once per day, can use Sky God's Range once per month.]

[Contracted Elementals

1. Peika (Lightning elemental)

2. Ruyue (Ice elemental)]

[Tamed subordinates:

1. Plene (Siren)]

Looking at the long list, I felt strange. The fruits of my 5 years of work were shown on my status. However, they were most likely lacking compared to other Dimensional Mercenaries, who must have spent a long time collecting skills points and stats.

Let's get stronger so that I don't have to worry about my lack of ability when I'm trying to go save a friend. I wanted strength that would allow me to freely do as I wished. I wanted strength that would allow me to send anyone flying that tried to kill me just because I was a Hero.

Then, when I was about to use Dimensional Travel, Loretta grabbed me.

“Shin-nim, don't tell me you're going right away?”

“I am. I'm leaving Plene behind too. I don't think her mental

attacks would be good enough against the demons anyways, and I can't let her die."

"That's not what I mean. You might not be able to come back for a few days, so shouldn't you say something to your parents?"

"Ah..."

I hadn't even thought about it, as my head was filled with thoughts about Ludia and Shina. But now that I thought about it, there was class today too! After being contacted yesterday by Ludia, I broke through the 50th floor without even getting a wink of sleep, and even became a Dimensional Mercenary. Whoa, mother and Yua had called me several times and sent me countless messages...

"I'll... go say goodbye."

"Yes, you should. Also, remember to put in a good word about me to your mother."

"No, I won't."

"Why!?"

I immediately went home and told my family what was going on. Mother and Yua immediately looked at me with doubtful eyes and Walker bluntly said I was lying. However, I didn't say anything more. Since I couldn't let them worry about me for nothing, I had

just told them that I had something important to take care of for a few days.

Then, I told only father the truth.

“I heard about it too. That Luka continent was in trouble.”

“Yes, father. I became something called a Dimensional Mercenary. I’m going to go help my friends.”

Father was silent for a moment, then reached out and patted my head.

“Yeah, go help your friends. I’m proud of you.”

“Yes, father. I will be back.”

“Don’t come back all beaten up.”

“Of course. I’m father’s son.”

Should I tell Ye-Eun and Hwaya too? No, there was no need to tell everyone about it. I only sent them messages saying I would be busy with the dungeon for a few days, then went back to the dungeon. Loretta, who had gone back to the Floor Shop, blinked her large golden eyes and asked.

“Oh? You came back? I thought you’d go straight to Luka continent.”

“Yeah, I thought I should say goodbye to Loretta too.”

“How rare of you to say something so praiseworthy... Eit, I’ll go for it!”

Loretta flew herself over the counter and dove at me. As expected of an elf, she was incredibly fast. Even while I was flustered, I caught her so that she wouldn’t get hurt. When I let out a sigh of relief, Loretta’s face was right in front of mine.

“Surprised?”

“Yes! Uup.”

The next moment, I was even more surprised. Loretta had suddenly kissed me. Looking at Loretta’s eyes in front of me, I blinked. I couldn’t understand what just happened. Well, Loretta’s lips and my lips touched.... Eeeeeeh!?

[You received the Queen Elf’s High Blessing. The effect will last for four days. You are protected against all low-rank and mid-rank status effects. You can maintain your consciousness for 5 minutes after falling into a half-dead state. Your luck increases by 100. All members of the Faerie race will see you favorably. Your vitality and magic recovery rate increases

greatly, and you will not get tired easily. Your attacks have an increased chance to land critical hits.]

A message rang in my ears, but I wasn't in the state of mind to listen to it calmly. While I was standing there blankly, Loretta brought her head back and made a 'mmm' noise. Her face was red like it would explode at any time. Thinking about the touch of her lips left on my lips, I was unable to say or do anything. Loretta then said in a quiet voice.

“Don't misunderstand, Shin-nim.”

“W-What?”

“I didn't kiss Shin-nim because I wanted to give you a blessing. I did it because I love you. Got it?”

There were many things I wanted to say. I didn't know we had this kind of relationship, I don't remember accepting you, that was my first kiss, etc, etc.

However, this was what I chose to say.

“O....Okay.”

“Good. Then you can go now.”

... For some reason, I felt like I was being tamed by Loretta. No, it couldn't be! However, because I didn't initially get mad, talking about it now would be awkward. In the end, I could only use Dimensional Travel while still thinking about her warmth left on my lips. I was the opposite of calm.

My destination was the Luka continent. We would rendezvous at Ehuir Empire's Imperial Palace.

The moment I used Dimensional Travel, I felt a pain like my body was being squeezed dry. The surrounding scenery melted, as did my body. The entire world became black, then turned bright again. My body was torn to shreds, glued back together, then torn to shreds again.

“Mmm...”

“Eh? It's a new face.”

“Don't tell me, there's a new Dimensional Mercenary? Haa, I didn't even notice.”

“He's handsome...”

After losing my consciousness, I half-opened my eyes from the sounds I heard around me. There were about a dozen people staring at me.

I realized I was lying on the ground and picked myself up. There

were knights and magicians lined up in the wide hall I was in. I even saw Ludia who was half-frowning.

There was no doubt. This was the Luka continent.

My first request as a Dimensional Mercenary had started.

Chapter 115. Avarice Devours Everything (2)

“I’m Kang Shin, an explorer from Earth. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Earth? Never heard of it before.”

“Same.”

“Damn, just how did he become a Dimensional Mercenary? From a world without any foundation...”

Most of the Dimensional Mercenaries gave me cold glances. Unlike the treatment I had been getting as the Crown Prince, they ignored me after just hearing where I was from. Had they never heard about me before? Did they all have their dungeon explorer communication channels off?

“What level do you think he is?”

“His equipment looks pretty good.”

“Are you stupid? You’re asking for his level as a Dimensional Mercenary? You’re a newbie too, right?”

There were 13 Dimensional Mercenaries other than me. Two additional people had accepted the request after me. There were only 57 Dimensional Mercenaries in the First Dungeon, and 14 of them had taken this request. Everyone seemed to be very active.

A young knight with long black hair approached me.

“I’m Bellode Iraus. As the request said, I am the commander of the Kiros Knights and a Gold rank explorer of the First Dungeon. Thank you for coming, Kang Shin-nim. The first princess has told me a lot about you. If you do your best to save the second princess, you won’t be disappointed by the rewards.”

“Thank you for having me.”

The knight named Bellode gave a very good first impression. He looked kind and stouthearted. Perhaps because of the pressure to save Shina, however, he had a cloudy expression. After greeting the knight, I turned to the other Dimensional Mercenaries to greet them, but they avoided my eyes. It meant they found it bothersome, even though they talked with each other as if to judge me when I arrived. They seemed to be saying that they didn’t want to waste their energy on useless exchange of greetings. I found it absurd.

Bellode made a bitter smile, looking at me making a stupefied expression, and said in a quiet voice that only I could hear.

“Please understand. I hear Dimensional Mercenaries become sensitive before missions.”

With the danger that came with the job, I wasn’t surprised. Plus, I was new. If I spoke out of line, it was easy for them criticize me as a rookie who didn’t know what he was saying. I sighed and turned

my head. Bellode then led us to a large table in the hall.

Ludia was also nearby. When our eyes met, she humphed and purposely turned her head the other way. At her somewhat expected reaction, I made a bitter smile.

On the table, there was a large map with the Imperial Palace in its center. Bellode took a short baton and pointed it on the map.

“With Kang Shin-nim here, all the Dimensional Mercenaries have arrived. We will do a briefing before we set off. We’ll take the shortest path to lead us to the Demon Lord’s garrison. As he is injured, the Demon Army is hastily pulling their army back, but if we move quickly with our elite forces, we will be able to catch up to them before they arrive at the Demon Lord’s territory.”

“Demon Lord’s territory, you say. I hear all the peak rank demons are staying there.”

“That is true. Until they ascertain their superior position, peak ranked demons prefer not come out of their territory. Since the Hero died... They might just wait until the world starts to collapse before they appear.”

“Hm, but still, the Demon Lord is...”

“The Demon Lord received a critical injury. Everyone on the spot saw it. Although we would be unable to take his life, he won’t be able to hinder our rescue mission. If you’d like, I can even bet my

soul.”

I silently listened to the conversation between Bellode and the Dimensional Mercenaries, and memorized the path Bellode showed us. In case everyone left, I would have to go save Shina alone.

Suddenly, someone tapped on my shoulder from behind. When I turned around, I saw Ludia whose face was completely red.

“What?”

“F-Father and mother... want to see you.”

“The emperor and empress!?”

“Follow me.”

I left the hall with Ludia. I could feel the stinging gazes of the mercenaries behind me. These guys, why were they emitting so much killing intent...!?

“Now that I think about it, I heard that beautiful princess has a boyfriend.”

“Right, I heard it was some damned rookie. I didn’t think he’d become a Dimensional Mercenary.”

“I wish he’d die here.”

You guys are all single, aren’t you!? And you, why are you glaring at me when you’re a girl!?

The emperor and empress were both waiting for me together. Plus, the emperor was wearing golden armor and the empress was wearing a golden silk robe for priestesses. They were undoubtedly wearing such eye-catching clothes on purpose. They wanted the enemy to focus on them.

“Oh, Ludia! Is that young man the one you mentioned?”

The moment the emperor caught sight of us, he exclaimed. I was surprised. He looked to be in his late 20’s at most. It felt weird that someone who looked so young was the emperor. Not to mention, he was strong. So he was an explorer before he was the emperor.

Ludia’s cheeks turned red at the emperor’s words and she shouted.

“I, I didn’t say anything! Shina was the one who blabbered about everything!”

“But every time she brought it up, you became excited and raised your voice. Can you show me your face?”

That calm and beautiful voice came from the empress. Just like her husband, she looked like she was only in her late 20’s. She

seemed to be a priestess of Mitarus just like Ludia, as her robe had similar design as hers.

The emperor was also handsome, but the empress was a real picturesque beauty. She and Ludia looked alike so much that I would believe that she was Ludia in 10 years. If there was one difference, it was her empress-like voluptuous...

“Ludia, there’s a chance for you too!”

“You idiot!”

“Huhu, the two of you get along very well. I’m relieved.”

I snapped out of my daze at the empress’ laughter.

“Ah, sorry. I’m... Kang Shin, an explorer from Earth.”

“I heard you came for Ludia and Shina even though you’re a Hero. As an emperor who rules a country and is now in charge of this world, I can only say that it’s foolish. But...”

The emperor grinned and hammered my shoulders.

“That’s what a man should do! Your ambition, I like it! So? Who do you want!? Will you take both? I doubt Shina or Ludia will refuse!”

“What!?”

“D-Dad! I said that’s not it! I don’t know about Shina, but not me!”

“You should learn to lie better, my daughter. But I see, you don’t want to share your husband with Shina. Then I’ll just have to leave it to my son-in-law. Do you like Ludia more?”

“Um... Both Shina and Ludia are my precious friends.”

That was all I could say for now. The empress then spoke with a light smile.

“I was also friends with my husband. With my eye, I saw a future with him and said it would never happen, but here I am.”

“I’d like to hold a ceremony for you two... but as you can see, we aren’t in a situation where that is possible. I apologize, my son-in-law.”

“...”

Before I noticed, he was addressing me as ‘son-in-law.’ Lost for words, I looked to Ludia, but she was too busy covering her reddened face with her hands. While the two of us were in panic, the emperor gestured at me to come closer. I approached him.

“I’m going to have to ask you for a favor... If the situation becomes dangerous, please run away with Ludia. Shina is my precious daughter and I’d like to save her if possible... but I can’t lose Ludia too.”

“... I understand.”

Although I wanted to say I’d save Shina no matter what, I couldn’t say something I couldn’t guarantee in front of the emperor who had such a serious look. The emperor then said with an even more serious expression.

“Also... don’t trust anyone other than Ludia and Bellode.”

“What do you mean?”

“Do you think the Demon Lord has only been trying to conquer the world with brute force?”

“You mean...”

“Everyone on this expedition are elites of the elites, but there might be some who might have been coaxed by the Demon Lord. Other than my daughter, Ludia, Bellode is the only one I can trust. Do not forget this.”

Now that I had heard about it, it was obvious. The Demon Lord defeated the Hero. Although he was heavily injured, he was still the winner. In such a situation, it would be strange if no one fell to

the Demon Lord's enticement. I couldn't help but feel bitter at the sudden truth I was made to realize.

When I backed away after hearing the emperor's words, he spoke to Ludia and me.

"The Hero died and the world's power has been stolen. New life can no longer be born in this world. This world will slowly but surely wilt. Even so, I don't want to give up. There is just too much on my shoulders for me to throw everything down and kneel... Shina, my precious daughter, is included. I beseech you, my son-in-law and my daughter. Please save Shina."

"Yes, Dad. I will save Shina."

"... I understand."

The world's power has been stolen and new life could no longer be born... I see. That's why the Hero was the core of a world. I finally understood everything about the Heroes. If new life couldn't be born, it was equivalent to the end of a world.

I bit down on my lips and tried to shake off the image of a grim future. The moment the emperor's words ended, the empress gestured at me. When I approached her, she took out a five-colored object from her inventory and handed it to me.

After receiving them, I realized it was half of a sword blade along with the rest of the broken sword. Surprisingly, the sword was still

emitting a five-colored light. Although I didn't know what the gem on the sword's hilt was, I got the feeling I wouldn't be able to buy it even if I sold my mansion. Although broken, this sword's value was unquestionable.

[Mitarus' Broken Holysword (God)

Durability – 0/560

Attack – 15,000

Equipment Requirement – Level 90, Hero

Options – All stats + 100, Damage against all demons including the Demon Lord x3. Can acquire all skills. Strength +20%, Speed +20%.

Special skill – Judgement of Light: Collects all light in the world, healing all allies in the battlefield and dealing a great amount of light attribute damage to all enemies in the battlefield or dealing a critical blow to a select target.

Description – A holysword for the Hero, crafted using Luka continent's most precious metal, Lukadion and imbued with the power of Mitarus. It lost its power and broke in the battle against the Demon Lord, and cannot be repaired.]

The world's strongest weapon suddenly appeared! My hands were shaking just holding this weapon!

“I apologize. It's broken, so it can't be used again. However, I believe it can be used in some other way, so I'll give it to you, a Hero of another world. Will you accept it?”

“Can I really accept it?”

“Huhu, who else other than you would take it, son-in-law?”

“Kuk.”

“Mom!”

I heard of the saying ‘lucky to have a good friend,’ but I didn’t think I would get a weapon like this for having one! Plus, when I saw the holysword, I immediately thought of a use for it. After unexpectedly receiving an amazing gift, I bowed to the emperor and empress and left the palace. With her face still red, Ludia followed me like a puppy.

“D-Don’t mind what Mom and Dad said! It was just that I’ve shown no interest in men, so they’re saying that because I brought you up once or twice!”

“Yeah, of course. I doubt you even see me as a man, anyways.”

“... Crack.”

Hm? Did I just hear something break? I looked around but everything looked fine. Ludia was only clenching her fists tightly.

After confirming that no one was around, I took out the Gluttony Spear.

“Hm? What are you doing?”

“The holysword your mother gave me, I can’t just hold onto it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Here, watch.”

I took the broken holysword pieces and brought it against the Gluttony Spear without any hesitation.

The Gluttony Spear then emitted a crazed red aura and swallowed the holysword.

[Crimson Gluttony Spear absorbed Mitarus’ Holysword.
Growth: 47%]

“Kyaaaak! T-The holysword disappeared!”

“Don’t be stupid, Ludia! The holysword is dead! But in my spear! In my heart! It lives on as one!”

This crazy spear’s growth only went up by 44% after absorbing a God ranked holysword, but I felt like I caught a glimpse of this spear’s future. I let out a satisfactory sigh, and declared to Ludia.

“Remember, Ludia. Avarice swallows everything.”

“Don’t act cool and say stupid things...!”

This was the conversation we had before our departure.

Author’s note:

This chapter was a chapter with Gluttony Spear, for Gluttony Spear, and of Gluttony Spear! Swallow everything! Ah, it can’t swallow other people’s weapons. If that was possible, the moment the spear touched any weapon... ^^ So Gluttony Spear can only swallow weapons that its master owns or weapons without a master ^^

Chapter 116. Avarice Devours Everything (3)

There was a total of 50 soldiers, consisting of 40 knights and 10 magicians. They were all dungeon explorers and experts who were at least level 70. Amongst them, there were even 20 First Dungeon explorers. In truth, I was surprised so many of them were still alive, given the fierce battle they must have been having with the Demon Army. If the 50 of them fought with Earth's rankers, they would win without doubt. Was Earth weak? Or was Luka continent strong...? If they lost even with such strong forces, just how strong was the Demon Army?

In addition to the 50 soldiers, there were 14 Dimensional Mercenaries. Everyone other than me seemed to at least be level 60, and as they were First Dungeon explorers and passed the tricky requirements to become Dimensional Mercenaries, they were all formidable in their own regard.

Then, there was Ludia and Bellode, making the number of people going on this expedition 66. Bellode, who was in charge of leading the expedition, was also in charge of protecting Ludia. As she was a priestess, she was valuable even though she was relatively low leveled.

“By the way, are there no Dimensional Mercenaries in the Second Dungeon?”

“There are. I heard there aren't any in the Third and Fourth Dungeons, but I know Dimensional Mercenaries can come from the Second Dungeon. It just looks like no one accepted the request this time.”

Ludia answered my question, then Bellode added to her explanation.

“Second Dungeon explorers, especially ones strong enough to be Dimensional Mercenaries, have extremely cautious nature. There are rumors that they never accept requests from worlds that have lost their Heroes.”

“I see...”

Although I thought they were cowards, I didn't voice my thought out loud.

“We will move by specially trained horses. They listen to people well, so you can be rest assured and ride on them.”

Thirty knights rode on the horses alone, while ten knights rode with magicians behind them. The Dimensional Mercenaries, who were watching them, seemed to get on the horses too, but two of them didn't.

“My subclass is Summoner, so I don't need it. Come, Wyvern.”

A middle-aged ajusshi who looked to be in his 40's reached out and summoned a house-sized dragon. Although I didn't want to admit it, it was damn cool. Damn it, how did he obtain the Summoner subclass? I'm jealous! I really am!

While I was watching him blankly, one other Dimensional Mercenary reached into her inventory and took something out. It was a wide, metallic board big enough for a person to lie on. Was that a hoverboard? That was a hoverboard!

“I’ll ride this, so don’t worry.”

“Mm, how is its speed compared to the battle horses?”

“Of course it’s faster! I have to be the one to slow myself down for you, so don’t worry about the speed!”

It was the voice of a woman! She was a violet-haired beauty who looked to be in her 20’s, but because her hair was pushed together to one side, half of her face was covered. From the visible half, however, I could tell that she was a beauty. It was then that her green eyes met mine. She was glaring at me frighteningly. It was then that I remembered, she was the woman who glared at me before!

I continued to stare at her, not knowing why she was glaring at me. Then, one of the knights not going on the expedition approached me with the rein of a cool white horse in hand. For some reason, I felt that the white horse was cooler than the horses other people got. Not to mention, it looked incredibly similar to the white horse Ludia was on. Plus, the knight had an overly respectful attitude.

“Kang Shin-nim, this is the horse assigned to you.”

“Ah, I’m fine too. Sorry for saying it late.”

It was clearly prepared for me, so I felt a bit sorry to decline, but I already had an excellent ride. In front of the knight looking puzzled, I materialized Ruyue, who I had already summoned beforehand. When a huge silver wolf appeared, a few people flinched, but I ignored their gazes and scratched her neck. With breath mixed with freezing energy, she asked.

[Do I kill them all?]

“No, Ruyue. We’re going to run for a while.”

[Okay!]

“An elemental.”

“A materialized elemental. It’s been a while.”

“This is the first time I’ve seen an Elementalist. They’re still being passed down?”

“He might have been born as one. The elemental seems pretty weak too.”

“Yep, weak.”

“Still a rookie, I see.”

Of course, Ruyue might seem weak in their eyes, but that was because I couldn't draw out all of her strength. When my skills grew, Ruyue and Peika would get stronger as well.

“We'll be setting off now! May the fortune of Goddess Mitarus be with us!”

When everyone got on their rides, a knight in charge of leading the way set off. The other knights on their horses followed him, and the Dimensional Mercenaries followed suit.

The wyvern-riding middle aged explorer flew a bit higher than everyone, and the woman on the hoverboard floated at the same height I was in, lying comfortably on the hoverboard. As for me, I asked Ruyue to run at the same speed as the battle horse.

“Bellode-ssi, before we catch up to the retreating Demon Army, will we not run into other monsters or demons?”

“Yes. We're taking the fastest route with the least amount of enemies, and we will continue adjusting our route by scouting with magical familiars.”

For a moment, I thought of Earth's GPS system.

“Pft. What's up with that shocked face? This much is standard.”

“In your world, maybe. Though, there’s something similar in my... Nevermind.”

Perhaps it was because she rode horses often, but Ludia skillfully rode her white horse and kept up with Bellode, laughing cheerfully as she made fun of me. While we were in the Imperial Palace, she looked down the entire time, but she seemed happier now that we were on the move. I smiled in relief.

“You’re prettier when you’re smiling. I couldn’t bear to see you the way you were before.”

“Hmph! You only just realized I was pretty? Stupid!”

While we were joking around with each other, Bellode smiled lightly and spoke.

“You two suit each other well.”

“Bellode, I already told you! We’re still just friends!”

“Huhu, ‘still,’ I see.”

“No! I said it wrong, we’re just friends!”

Bellode also seemed to be skilled in teasing Ludia. While the three of us were chatting, someone approached my side. When I turned

my head, the hoverboard was flying next to me! The violet-haired woman lying on the hoverboard glared at me and spoke.

“You, I’ll kill you.”

“Why!?”

“I called dibs on her... If you steal her away, I won’t forgive you!”

“... You, don’t get near Ludia!”

Run, Ludia! An unexpected person is aiming for you!

Although I didn’t think the rescue mission would be a walk in the park, we ran for the whole day and got ambushed when we stopped to take a rest and eat.

[Guooooooooo!]

“It’s the monster unit under the demons’ command! Kuk, I couldn’t even detect them with familiars!”

“Magicians, take your distance and prepare your magic!”

“Knights, protect the magicians! Squad One, to the front! Space out and cover the area!”

While the knights were moving busily, the mercenaries each took out their weapons and confirmed the monsters. Strangely enough, none of them stood near each other. Come on, nobody trusted each other!? How did you climb the dungeon until now!?

[Guaaaaaaaaa!]

“Kuk, someone help out in the sky! These damned chimeras!”

All of the monsters were peculiar. They had black bodies and looked like several monsters mixed together. The one closest to me was at least 3 meters tall, had scaly skin, and had four arms of different thickness. The arms looked like they were taken from four different creatures.

Plus, it had two heads, one that looked like a komodo dragon's and one that looked like a human's.

“It's the Demon Army's trait. They create chimeras from mixing multiple lives together, without their consent, of course. They're evil and cruel.”

Bellode explained to me while gritting his teeth. Before taking on the monsters, I looked at the others fighting the chimeras. The knights and magicians were working together to push back the chimeras, and the Dimensional Mercenaries each took on a chimera, weaving in and out of fights.

The most eye-catching among them was the hoverboard and the

wyvern. They were both fighting the flying monsters. The wyvern breathed out strong flames, and the woman on the hoverboard swung a strange weapon filled with her aura that seemed to be made of clumps of steel linked together.

Although they were strong, I didn't think they were much stronger than me. I thought anyone who could be Dimensional Mercenaries would have grinded elixirs like me, but was I wrong?

“Ah, I see. If they were like me, the moment they cleared the 50th floor...”

The moment they became a Gold ranked explorer, they would have become Dimensional Mercenaries. However, they became Dimensional Mercenaries past level 60 or 70. They had taken a different route than me. Up until now, I felt that I was lacking compared to them, but I decided to let that thought go.

I held my spear and aimed at the chimeras that had appeared in groups. I didn't know where they were coming from, but they were popping out from all directions of the forest we were walking through. Everyone was currently busy fighting them, but the mercenaries were clearly not trying their best. Shouldn't they hurry up and take care of them, so we could get our rest!?

“Alright, Ruyue... Let's go! Gale Track!”

[Auuuuuuu!]

Ruyue exerted her presence with a howl filled with freezing energy. At the same time, I poured an abundant amount of mana into Peika. With Zeus' power, my bond with Peika had gotten deeper. Just by activating Spirit Aura, Gluttony Spear lost its original color and transformed to a golden lightning bolt.

Immediately afterwards, Ruyue ran forward!

“Haaaaap! Fight me!”

[You used Provoke! Enemies from all sides attack you with hostility!]

[Kiaaak!]

[A lightning elemental!]

[An Elementalist!]

[A new sacrifice...!]

Chimeras of all sizes and shapes pounced towards me. Each and every one of them were strong! Some had poisonous claws, some had eyes that charmed, and some spit out acidic saliva.

[Auuuuu!]

However, they could not match Ruyue's Ice Breath. Immediately afterwards, they were sent flying by Ruyue's body and my lightning spear.

Ruyue was in charge of defense and Peika was in charge of offense! Gale Track! In its path, Peika and Ruyue's effects became one, displaying the greatest synergistic effect. It didn't matter how strong the chimeras were. My destructive power increased by 110% during charge type skills! I had confidence that even Floor Masters couldn't withstand my charge.

[Critical Hit!]

[Critical Hit!]

Chimeras were made of other creatures. As they weren't invertebrates, they had bones. With Skull Breaker's title effect, once a critical hit was dealt, parts of the chimeras blew up no matter how big they were. My charge continued without stopping. If there was one thing I wasn't happy about, it was that my enemies were too few in number!

In the blink of an eye, I reached the rearmost chimera, which was over 3 meters tall and was riding on a large lizard. It was easy to tell that it was a chimera. It had four arms, each carrying a large weapon! From the aura it was emitting, it seemed to be the

chimera squad's captain.

[Kugagagaga! You are truly fast and strong! I'll take your legs and make them mine!]

“Like I care!”

In addition to charging, Gale Track also let me deal a final blow imbued with wind! I pulled my spear in front of my chest. Above the lightning spear, a gust of wind appeared, rotating at an astonishing speed. Originally, it would end with a simple addition of wind, but Hermes and mastering Divine Speed let my affinity to the wind elemental reach the peak, making the wind more formidable. It didn't seem like a low-rank skill at all.

[Kugaga, take this! Giant's...!]

You dare to interrupt my skill!? The moment the chimera moved its four arms to use a skill, I activated Divine Speed. Its movements immediately slowed down, almost as if it stopped completely. On the other hand, I had become incredibly fast, as if I had grown wings. Although Divine Speed itself protected by body to a certain degree, it was still hard to handle 1000% of my speed.

However, there was no problem with one specific motion. It was the motion I made the most since I was born, and the motion that first made me get called a Hero.

“Die!”

The wind-lightning spear shot out, aimed at a single point in the giant's chest. The attack that contained my body's concentrated energy easily broke through the giant's chest, and the power that was imbued in the spear then exploded.

[Critical Hit!]

[Low-rank Gale Track became level 3. Your acceleration during charging increases, and the power imbued in the final blow becomes stronger.]

Divine Speed's duration also ended. Feeling the slightly creaking body, I pulled out my spear from the giant's chest. At that moment, green blood spurted out toward me, which I dodged frightened. After hitting the ground, the blood melted the ground. So it really was acidic!

I froze the blood continuing to spurt out with Ruyue's ability, then checked the state of the chimera. Its chest was caved in, like a bomb had struck it. Its internal organs, bones, and muscles had all blown up, and it was clearly in an irrecoverable state. If it could move after this, it wouldn't be a chimera, but a Gamera.

As expected, the chimera had stopped breathing without even letting out death throes. Confirming that there was no sign of life, I put the corpse in my inventory. Then, I turned around and

checked the state of the battlefield. Most of the knights were looking at me surprised, and a few of the Dimensional Mercenaries were nodding their heads.

“He’s quite good.”

“Ha, we can’t fall behind. The newbie took the head! You guys better try harder!”

Hu, it seemed I had successfully raised everyone’s fighting spirit. I nodded my head in satisfaction, and looked for my next opponent.

Although I didn’t realize, this was the moment I engraved the name, Kang Shin, in the entire dungeon.

Chapter 117. Avarice Devours Everything (4)

Among the members of the expedition, Ludia had the lowest level, and everyone else including me were explorers that were at least level 50. Other than the magicians, who had a low constitution stat, we had no problem going without sleep for a few days. As such, even though we stopped to rest and eat, we did not set aside time to sleep.

Taking care of the chimeras that the demons had left behind, chasing them, resting, and chasing them again... After two days, Ludia didn't look so well.

“Ludia, are you okay?”

We were currently taking a 2-hour rest. We were told that we would catch up to the Demon Army in just a day, so the Dimensional Mercenaries were relieving their fatigue in their own ways and preparing themselves for battle. As I wasn't fatigued in the slightest, I worried about Ludia instead, who looked to be in a serious state.

“I'm okay. It's nothing compared to what Shina must be experiencing right now.”

Ludia drank a Health Potion and replied with a frown.

“Who knows what Shina is going through right now... I can't complain with just this much.”

“Let me see that.”

“Ah!”

I snatched the potion Ludia was holding, and her eyebrows shot up. She really was fierce when angry. However, Ludia soon made a curious expression watching what I was doing.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m making a potion slushy.”

“Slushy...?”

I froze the potion with Ruyue’s freezing energy, then shook it! With just that, I made a slushy in just a few seconds. When I gave it to Ludia, she tilted her head. After eating it, she exclaimed in surprise.

“It’s cool and crunchy. It’s good!”

“Right?”

“Yeah!”

While I was happy watching Ludia whose expression had gotten

brighter, I heard a voice that I had grown familiar to in the past few days.

“I’ll kill you...”

“This stalker....”

The violet-haired woman on her hoverboard glared at me like I had killed her parents. With a sigh, I spoke.

“I told you not to come near Ludia.”

“Ah, she’s one of the mercenaries...”

Ludia noticed her too, bowing her head slightly to greet her. The woman started breathing roughly just from that. It was truly disgusting.

“T-The disheveled priestess robe is... kuk, unbearable.”

“If it’s unbearable, please go back to your planet and stop giving me goosebumps.”

“I need to greet her too.”

“Just go!”

While I was arguing with her, Ludia's voice became low for some reason.

“Do you know her? Are you close? ... Are you guys in a man-woman relationship?”

“I've never seen her until I came here. Don't say something so horrible.”

“No! Why would I, with a man...!”

The woman exclaimed in a loud voice, then sat upright on the hoverboard and beat her chest.

“I'm Syrmia Bamirtuno. I'm Xenon realm's first-class warrior.”

“And she's homosexual.”

I added to her introduction, and Ludia instantly moved back. Syrmia Bamirtuno gave me a deathly glare.

“I wanted to slowly let her know!”

“Sorry, but I have no plans to give you my friend.”

“I-I'm normal. I, I have a fiancé too!”

“Fiance!? Who’s that? I’ll kill him!”

At her words, Ludia’s cheeks reddened as she pointed at me. You’re using me as a shield? You coward! Pretending to be shy won’t work!

Then, Syrmia Bamirtuno quietly took out a steel whip. I flinched for a second and took out my Gluttony Spear as well.

“S-Shin? Are you really fighting?”

“Ludia, duck.”

“Duc...!?”

The next moment, I embraced her and rolled on the ground. Boom! Above us, Bamirtuno’s whip had collided with something.

“It’s an ambush! Everyone prepare for battle!”

“Ho, you blocked that? You aren’t so bad!”

Along with Bellode’s ringing voice, an unpleasant screeching voice also rang out. Holding Ludia with one arm, I retreated to where others were and raised my head. We had noticed their presence too late! We were already surrounded by demons. Not to mention, these guys... they were extremely strong!

“Warm... This isn’t fair.”

“Ludia, did you say something?”

“No, nothing. I’m okay, so you can let me go now.”

“Not yet. Even if you hate it, wait just a bit more.”

“Stupid, I don’t hate it, so...!”

“Protect her, newbie! If she gets even a scratch, I’ll kill you!”

“Don’t look this way and fight, Bamirtuno!”

There were 16 demons, but four times as many chimeras. While I was retreating with Ludia, a few of the magicians’ heads had already been severed. A few of the mercenaries had also used Return or ran to the dungeon. Damn it, they really cared for their safety the most!

“Wyvern, burn them!”

[Guaaaaaaa!]

“Fight! Magicians, calm down and chant your spells! Although they’re demons, we can kill them!”

“You want to use magic in front of us? How cute!”

The fight had become chaotic quickly. I sent the chimeras attacking us flying with Tempest and tried to ensure Ludia’s safety. Meanwhile, Bamirtuno was fighting the demon that had attacked us. The demon had a human-like appearance, dark blue skin, and a single horn shooting out of his forehead. His completely black eyes made me feel a natural aversion to him. However, this demon was strong, stronger than any of the ones that had attacked us.

“You, you’re aiming for the princess!”

“Was I? She’s the princess?”

“Kuk!”

He was using a whip like Bamirtuno, but his long and thin whip was clearly stronger than Bamirtuno’s steel whip. Bamirtuno shouted with tendons showing on her forehead.

“Iron Rain!”

Her whip disassembled and the lumps of steel shot toward the demon. The demon raised his whip, striking them down quickly, and laughed.

“Hahaha, not bad! You didn’t learn whip technique, but were born with the power to wield steel!”

You should have realized that earlier by seeing her hoverboard!

I couldn't watch their battle any longer. Although I was retreating deeper into our camp, more and more chimeras were approaching us.

"The target is there."

"It's not the man, but the woman he's holding!"

"Take her! If not, kill her!"

Kuk! These damned bastards! With Ludia in my arm, I couldn't fight freely.

"Ludia, run to the dungeon for a bit! They're aiming for you!"

"I can't run by myself while everyone is fighting!"

"I'll call you when the fight is over, so go to the dungeon! You're in the way!"

"The target is trying to run to the dungeon!"

"Stop her! Sever her limbs!"

Ugh, these god damned bastards! You want to cut off her limbs to stop her from going to the dungeon!? Even I only broke them!

“Ruyue!”

[Kuaaaaaang!]

In an instant, everything in sight became dyed in white. Ruyue made an ice wall completely protecting Ludia and me.

“It won’t last long. Hurry and go to the dungeon!”

“Uuuut!”

“I told you, I’ll call you when the fight is over, so please.”

“You...!”

“Also, Ludia. When you’re back, only trust my words.”

“What?”

Hearing cracking sounds from the chimeras trying to break in, I let Ludia go. Then, I gripped my spear tightly and told her.

“I’ve been thinking that it was strange that they’re specifically picking our rest periods to attack. Something doesn’t feel right.

They know about us too well. There's most likely a spy."

"O-Okay... Don't let me wait too long... Don't die. If you think you will, you have to run."

Ludia raised her arms and opened the door to the dungeon. With a smile, I nodded my head, watching her leave.

Immediately afterwards, the ice wall shattered.

"The target escaped!"

"Take hostages! That man is in a relationship with the target!"

Hey, you guys have something wrong! Confirming the sheer number of chimeras charging toward me, I hurriedly materialized Ruyue and jumped on her back. Then, I put a highest-grade Mana Potion (30,000 gold each) in my mouth.

"Come at me!"

[You used Provoke! Enemies from all sides attack you with hostility!]

"Where are all the mercenaries!? You guys need work harder!"

“We don’t have time to deal with small fries like the chimeras, rookie!”

“These damned demons! They’re so strong!”

I realized that the mercenaries were fighting the demons. The knights had finally arranged themselves in a formation. As for the magicians, half of them had already died. Damn, they really should have put some points into their constitution...!

“Gale Track!”

[Dodge!]

[Don’t get it by that, run!]

“Like I’d let you! Get over here!”

Now that they were affected by the Provoke skill, only the tip of my spear awaited them! I stabbed and slashed the chimeras without hesitation. After sending several chimeras flying with the final blow, I could finally secure a clear view.

[Low-ranked Gale Track became level 7! The AoE (Area of Effect) of the skill has increased, letting you damage enemies not in your path!]

“This is...”

Many demons were dead, as were most of the chimeras. Only half of the knights remained. If the ones that ambushed us were elites within the Demon Army, then after winning this battle, it wouldn't be impossible to complete the request successfully.

However, most of the Dimensional Mercenaries had already run away. In other words, they had decided that the mission would not be successful. Of course, they must have realized that there was a spy in our midst. If there were enemies on the inside, the difficulty would shoot up.

Even so, it might be possible if the Dimensional Mercenaries worked together, but to think they'd give up so easily... Although there were around six mercenaries still fighting the demons, looking at their ugly complexions, it seemed they would give up soon.

Then, something rolled toward my feet. Looking at it, my eyes opened wide.

It was Syrmia Bamirtuno's head.

“That was a fun fight. So, will you let me enjoy more, ‘Earth's Hero?’”

When I raised my head, I caught sight of the demon that was

fighting Bamirtuno. The blood on his whip was extremely clear and fresh.

“Probably not. I’m strong, you see... Haat!”

Heroic Strike together with Divine Speed. The Heroic Strike I was using for the first time since I came here was blocked by the demon. Although it busted his hand, it healed up in an instant. What was that regeneration? Don’t tell me he could continue regenerating forever?

“Hero, is this the first time you’ve seen rapid regeneration? What’s with that surprised face?”

“I quietly thrust my spear at him. Although I used Divine Speed again, he blocked it. This time, his entire arm blew up, but he easily regenerated it.

But seeing him protect his heart, it meant his regenerative ability would not work easily if his heart was blown up. That said, it didn’t mean anything if I could not pierce his heart even with Divine Speed!

“I can see your trajectory. If you’re just stabbing in a straight line, I can block your attack the moment I grasp your trajectory, regardless of your speed. Hero, you’re quite weak, aren’t you? Even weaker than that steel bitch.”

He threw Bamirtuno’s body at me. Startled, I received her body

and fell back, setting it down carefully. Then, I asked.

“I didn’t show any evidence of being a Hero after I arrived here. How did you know?”

“Is that so? Didn’t all the knights know?”

“So it’s as I thought.”

Although I already knew, I was now certain. Who was it? Who was the spy? I didn’t know. What was important now was to survive.

“Who are you?”

“How nice of you to ask. I’m His Highness Demon Lord’s right arm, the Demon Army’s Commander Shatuno.”

“So you mean you’re currently the strongest in the Demon Army.”

“Indeed.”

Although I couldn’t trust him, it was probably true. There was no reason for him to lie, and it made sense for the strongest demons to attack us if they wanted to prevent us from reaching the Demon Lord. It also made sense why the strong Dimensional Mercenaries couldn’t defeat the demons so easily.

In that case...

“I wanted to save it... but there’s no other choice.”

“Hm?”

“Deific Manifestation!”

If I wasn’t strong enough, I would leave it to master to teach me!

Chapter 118. Avarice Devours Everything (5)

The change was dramatic. I felt someone else's presence in my head and my body felt like it was floating up slowly. In the next moment, I gave the right to control my body to someone else and entered spectator mode.

Unfortunately, Peruta did not have the ability to wield elementals, so they were unsummoned. Peruta couldn't use my class or subclass-specific skills, nor could he use Heroic Strike. He could use skills other than them.

[All of your MP has been used.]

[Half of your HP has been used.]

[Using 18,790 MP and 12,545 HP, you manifest the Mythological Heroic Spirit, 'Peruta Rello Vatifofoa,' for 26 minutes and 57 seconds.]

“It hasn't been 29 days. Plus, this environment...”

[Peruta, I'll leave it to you. I can't handle them with my strength.]

Peruta looked around. He confirmed the single-horned demon and the bladed whip in his hand. Then, he examined his body and

grinned.

“This isn’t Earth... Plus, you’ve grown a lot in such a short amount of time. That’s good.”

Shatuno seemed to have realized something had changed from Peruta’s murmuring, as he pointed his whip at him.

“The smell of your mana is different. Who are you?”

“Demon. There were once demons in Edias, too... Words aren’t important in a life-or-death battle... Are you ready?”

Without using Divine Speed, Peruta charged at Shatuno with an incredible speed. His whip hastily blocked Peruta’s spear, but it could not withstand the impact and flew back.

“You’re different from before!”

“He will soon become as strong as me!”

Peruta thrust the Gluttony Spear quickly. The blue maelstrom spiraling around his spear was undoubtedly from the Peruta Circuit that was circulating inside of him.

So this is the Unique Spear Technique that lies beyond the high-rank Spear Technique! Even knowing that now wasn’t the appropriate situation, I became immersed in the overwhelming

prestige that Peruta's movements created. Not to mention, I even thought his Peruta Circuit was completely different than the one I had been using.

“Kuhat, right! Now I feel like I'm fighting! Snake Touch!”

“A weak attack like that won't be enough!”

Shatuno's whip transformed in an instant, flying toward Peruta's neck to bite it like a living snake. However, Peruta instantly pulled his feet back and vertically struck his spear down, hitting the whip away. The blue whirlwind endlessly spiraling around his spear shattered the snake's head into pieces.

“Dead Steam!”

That was what Shatuno was aiming for. The shards of the whip inflated and exploded. The whip had been a one-time use weapon from the start. I felt bad about Bamirtuno who had lost her life from such a weapon.

No matter how strong Peruta was, he was using my body. As such, he instantly imbued mana into his feet, then jumped back, creating a storm in his path. The explosion was undoubtedly grand and powerful, but it was easily erased by the storm Peruta created.

At the same time, I was busy trying to understand the manifestation and transformation of mana. His attainment in spearmanship was undoubtedly higher than mine, but what was

even more shocking was the way he wielded mana. I was confident that I could catch up to his spearmanship, but the natural application of mana on his spear techniques was something far beyond what I could see.

From the use that did not match its level of attainment, I felt my Peruta Circuit creaking, but Peruta naturally softened it with his rotational power. It was truly shocking. In the next moment, he held Gluttony Spear up again. Peruta Circuit's strong current was gathering mana, not just from the body, but from the world itself. A dazzling blue light enveloped the spear. It was as if I was looking at the completed version of Tempest, which only took 300 MP for me to use.

“Try this!”

“Huhu, as if!”

Despite Peruta's quick charge and spear attack, Shatuno took out a shield out of thin air and defended. However, after colliding and grinding against each other for a moment, the shield quickly gave in, being crushed and sent flying away. With a crack, Shatuno's arm was also severed from his body. It was the perfect attack while Shatuno's guard was down.

“Kahak!”

“You're surprisingly weak. What military rank do you have? A private?”

“Private? Ha... I’ll show you the power of a private!”

Shatuno’s arm that had fallen to the ground flew up. In an instant, it inflated, becoming large and black, and its tip became hard. It had transformed to a strange weapon similar to a club. Shatuno grabbed the ‘weapon’ with his remaining hand. Why wasn’t he regenerating it? Was there a limit to his regenerative ability?

Wounds from Peruta’s attacks could not be regenerated. Rather than his attainment in spearmanship, I had the feeling that there was a secret behind the power created from combining Peruta Circuit and his spearmanship. The desire to learn his techniques drove me crazy.

“Devil Buster!”

“Kuu, did you think of that name? How childish!”

Perhaps because he had turned his arm into a weapon, it was moving on its own and it was powerful. After blocking his attack once with the Gluttony Spear, Peruta dodged his attack. His weapon struck down on the ground, and a part of the earth turned into metallic sludge and shot up.

The metallic sludge let out a black miasma and attacked me. Peruta kicked the ground again and created another storm. He seemed quite surprised by the attack.

[That weapon is dangerous. It will be fine for this weapon enveloped with my aura, but your body won't be so lucky. If it hit you, you'll turn into that metallic sludge.]

[Can't my armor block it?]

[It can, but once or twice only.]

Peruta looked nonchalant as he exchanged blows with Shatuno's weapon, but he whispered in a worried voice that only I could hear. If Peruta allowed himself to get hit, I would receive an irrecoverable injury. Even though Peruta was hiding it, Shatuno seemed to have realized his hesitation, as he attacked more boldly and aggressively.

“Stop running away!”

Shatuno dodged the spear left and right and attacked my body with his weapon. Peruta read the trajectories of his attacks and struck them away with his spear imbued with his mana's rotational power. While their exchange continued, Shatuno's aura continued to grow bigger.

The ground became like a furnace of metallic sludge, and the sludge occasionally attacked Peruta and annoyed him. Although Peruta was striking them down without much difficulty, it was hard to say that it would continue forever. If this continued, Peruta would be at a disadvantage.

“What happened to your confidence!? Try harder, Hero!”

“The Hero is my disciple, not me! I’ll express my respect for your strength, but I don’t want to deal with such dirty attacks much longer!”

As I had the Regeneration skill on Flesh Golem’s Second Finger, I wasn’t so worried about losing parts of my body. Even so, I advised Peruta so he could utilize my body more easily.

[Peruta, you can use Heavy Armor Mastery, Divine Speed, Dash, and Gale Track.]

[I don’t care about the armor skill, but can you explain what the other skills do?]

I gave an as detailed an explanation as possible for the skills. Shooting out a Tempest, Peruta distanced himself from Shatuno and nodded. Then, he boldly looked around the battlefield. Most of the demons were on the brinks of death, and the remaining mercenaries were working together. It was the same for the surviving knights and magicians.

Peruta restarted the fight.

“Here I go. Gale Track!”

“You!”

Peruta, who had been on the defense, charged at Shatuno. Dash, which let me run faster, was a passive skill and automatically applied to Gale Track. As Peruta also received my tattoo and equipment's effects, Gluttony Spear was enveloped with a strong rotational force shook off the wave of metallic sludge shooting toward him and struck Shatuno upward.

“Kuaaak!”

Shatuno flew dozens of meters into the air! Although charge type skills were strengthened, sending a Demon Army Commander flying with a spear showed how powerful Peruta was. At the same time, a tornado connecting the earth and sky appeared, binding Shatuno completely. Of course, he wouldn't stay bound for long!

“Hey, wyvern! Hold him back for a bit!”

“Ha, how arrogant, newbie!”

Peruta ignored the wyvern-riding mercenary's answer and shot toward the other demons. Gale Track did not have to be used in a straight line. Of course, it would be stronger and faster if it was used in a straight line, but using Peruta Circuit, Peruta changed the trajectory of Gale Track so naturally. In fact, Peruta Circuit's rotational force was increasing Gale Track's destructive force.

“Kuk, it's an ambush!”

“Block him!”

“Ek, what’s that!”

The demons that were fighting the mercenaries became flustered at Peruta’s charge and tried to block him. However, Gale Track was slightly different than when I used it. Peruta Circuit’s rotational force swallowed Gale Track, and the boundless current of destruction gathered on the tip of Gluttony Spear, exploding out continuously. Simply put, the demons could not block Peruta’s power, which had even devoured Shatuna’s abilities. Since I was confident in beating them without Peruta’s help, it was easy for Peruta to do the same.

The surviving demons thus began to float into the air one by one, each trapped in a tornado similar to the one Shatuno was in. Interestingly, they flew toward Shatuno, who was trying to break out of his own tornado, and smashed into him.

Shatuno was ignoring the wyvern’s flames and was close to escaping the tornado. But when he collided with his allies, the tornadoes binding them combined into one, pushing them up even further into the air. As more and more demons collided, they were pushed further up into the air. It was like watching tornadoes combining to form a greater disaster.

“What, is he really a newbie?”

“Stupid, can’t you see the difference in the destructive force?”

“It looks like he manifested someone into him. Was there a skill that could do that?”

“That bastard! He took my prey!”

“Don’t lie. I know you were contemplating about running away with Return.”

“Lads, attack him while they’re grouped up!”

After shooting all the enemies into the air, he encouraged the mercenaries, knights, and magicians with an expression like he just made a game-winning home run. Then, he bent his knees. Feeling the powerful current of wind gathering around Peruta, I trembled. This guys! He turned Gale Track into a completely different skill!

“Whatever! Let’s attack!”

“Rising Fire!”

“Die demon bastards!”

Dozens of auras and magic shot up from the ground. At their levels, even melee range explorers had at least one long-ranged attack. The wyvern’s owner seemed to have strengthened the wyvern with his power as it breathed out white flames like Hwaya’s. Consecutive explosions rang out in the air like fireworks.

It was then that Peruta jumped.

“Divine Speed”

[Using 10% of your mana, your speed is multiplied by 1000% for 3 seconds!]

I didn't know how, but Peruta transferred the power of wind from Gale Track's final blow underneath his feet, and used Peruta Circuit's strong rotational force to let it explode. Immediately afterwards, he used Divine Speed to make himself faster, and the result was hard to described with words.

“Huaaaaaaa!”

My body shot up so quickly that I was surprised it was breaking from the shock. I felt like fainting from the sensation, but Peruta seemed fine and he even pulled his spear back. Kuk, I thought I wouldn't lose to anyone in willpower, but to think I was about to faint from this much shock.

Even while I was self-reflecting and gathering my focus, Peruta continued to shoot up and up.

At the end of Peruta's path were the demons that were gathered up helplessly. Shatuno, whose feet were tied from the the demons

stuck to him, saw Peruta approaching him. Flashing his eyes, he swung his weapon. The other demons were in its trajectory.

“Kuak!”

“Sacrifice yourselves for the Demon Army’s future!”

To think he’d sacrifice his subordinates in this situation. While Peruta opened his eyes widely, one of the demons turned to wet tar and swept over Peruta from the sky. This time, I was ready to lose one of my limbs. While I was preparing myself to use regeneration, Peruta revealed his final move.

“Sacrificing your on subordinates! In front of the War God, there is no greater disrespect!”

With a thunderous roar, Peruta shot his spear. The power that had pushed Peruta to the current height directly flowed to the tip of this spear and caused an explosion. Like shooting a shotgun, the explosion that happened on the spear tip annihilated the tar instantly and continued to the grouped up demons. Although the demons tried to squeeze out their magic and create barriers, they were unable to block Peruta’s power.

A great explosion erupted.

[Critical Hit!]

[Demons should have bones right?]

“Probably.”

Exchanging rather stupid conversation with Peruta, we began to fall. Did Peruta know we would fall? He must have, right? Peruta then let me down with his murmur.

“Shoot, I forgot how to get down.”

[Peruta!?!]

“When I focus too much on battle, my blood rises... It’s been awhile since I’ve had a real fight, so I can’t help having a side-effect like this. But thanks to you, I enjoyed fighting. Now, I have no regrets.”

[Don’t say it like I’m going to die, Peruta!]

“I’m kidding, of course. Dying now would be troublesome. Don’t worry, we’ll land with only a single broken limb.”

[So one limb is going to be broken for sure...]

When I sighed, someone caught me from the air. The middle-aged mercenary’s wyvern had grabbed my head with its claws.

“Newbie, I don’t know who possessed you, but well done. To be honest, that demon commander was the most dangerous.”

“Well, thanks.”

The wyvern descended quickly and safely put me down on the ground. The mercenaries and knights were gathered, healing their injuries.

“Well done, newbie!”

“That skill won’t continue forever, right?”

“The feeling is already a bit different than before. It looks like he’s maintaining it with mana.”

“Hey, if you have time to analyze newbie’s skill, heal my damned leg.”

“Stop complaining. Oi, the paladin over there!”

The mercenaries talked loudly, showing themselves off. As we could take care of the demons with their help, I could look at them happily. As the knights were all paladins under the Order of Mitarus, they were healing each other and the mercenaries.

[We’ll have to call Ludia again.]

“I don’t know who Ludia is, but you shouldn’t.”

[Why?]

“Isn’t it obvious? It’s not over yet.”

Just when the battle seemed to be over, the atmosphere froze. Immediately afterwards, as if to prove that Peruta was right, a disturbing whish rang out from the sky.

[Ku... To think I’d need to show my real body. I looked down on humans too much...!]

We all turned to the direction of the voice. In the sky, we saw a winged, large-bodied, single-armed monster.

[I’ll swallow you all! Be glad, you can become the blood and flesh of I, Commander Shatuno!]

It was the start of the second battle.

Author’s note:

I wanted to end it in this chapter, but I couldn’t. As you can see, this chapter is 160% of the normal chapter length, so I really tried hard! But it wasn’t possible. I had to show the strength of a Demon

Lord Commander and Peruta fight against him. Hope you enjoyed it! We'll wrap it up in the next chapter and go attack the Demon Army!

Chapter 119. Avarice Devours Everything (6)

Earlier, he only had one horn. But now, there were two long, thick horns protruding out from his forehead. I didn't know whether the number of horns was important, but the aura he was emanating was twice as powerful as before. In addition, his skin was now deep red, like an explosive volcano, when he had had dark blue skin before. His veins bulged out on his skin, adding to his already creepy appearance.

He grew to over 2 meters tall and his body looked like the Hulk's. With his two bat-like wings and thick scaled tail protruding from his butt, he truly looked like a devil that appeared in myths. Surprisingly, even though he had changed so much, he had not regenerated his arm.

I didn't know if that was the reason, but the club he was holding looked stronger and more repugnant. It was red, black, long, thick, and its tip was split into two parts, which swam through the air like water snakes. Patting his wyvern, the middle aged mercenary made a short comment.

“He's big.”

[Huu... You should be honored to see this appearance. It's my true body that's rarely shown even in the Demon Realm!]

“I don't think just one of us can do it. Alright, let's go.”

“Focus on defense. Besides me, no one here can catch up to his

speed.”

Peruta replied to one of the mercenaries words. As if to prove that Peruta was right, Shatuno instantly disappeared from the place he was in and appeared behind a mercenary, swinging his whip down. The mercenary, who possessed a defensive equipment, threw the ring that broke from blocking Shatuno’s attack and shouted.

“At least 300 dexterity! If you’re not confident in dodging his attacks, run!”

“F*ck, he’s not even the Demon Lord. How is an Army Commander so strong...!?”

“Haa, at least he’s the only one left! The reward for this mission will be no joke!”

At the summoner mercenary’s shout, the mercenaries that were about to open the dungeon gate flinched. If the request’s difficulty was high, the dungeon would naturally give better rewards. No matter how much the Dimensional Mercenaries prioritized their safety, if they weren’t willing to take risk, they wouldn’t have become Dimensional Mercenaries in the first place. They were here because they were willing to throw themselves in danger and take challenges.

Thanks to the mercenary’s timely shout, other mercenaries that could block Shatuno’s attacks got their fighting spirit back. Then, Peruta took a step forward and spoke.

“Sorry, but he’s mine.”

“What? Are you saying that you want to fight him alone, newbie?”

[Wait, Hero. I’ll deal with you after I take care of everyone else.]

“Like I’d wait, Demon Soldier. You become stronger the more you absorb, so I need to deal with you before that happens.”

At Peruta words, all the mercenaries’ complexions became pale. Everyone, including me, realized. He hadn’t changed from being angered. He had changed from absorbing the energies of the demons that accompanied him! But how did Peruta know?

The summoner mercenary then said with a curious expression.

“Wait, newbie. Doesn’t that mean you gathered up the demons so he could get stronger?”

“Of course not. It’s the opposite. I made him weaker.”

“What?”

Despite the contradiction in his words, Peruta had a commanding attitude. Shatuno, who was listening to him, also looked at him with interest.

[Quite funny, Hero! Me? Weaker? See with your own body how weaker I got!]

“I will.”

Shatuno's body once again disappeared from the sky. He appeared in front of me in an instant, and at the same time that his two-part whip flew toward me, his sharp tail drew a diagonal line from below. Damn, I could barely see it! How could he get so fast!?

However, Peruta was able to see his movements. In truth, if Peruta wasn't controlling my body, I would not have been able to see his attack at all. He lightly swung the Gluttony Spear, pushing the whip aside and blocking the tail coming from below. Then, with a smile, he kicked the tail with his left foot enveloped in a whirlwind.

His tail exploded.

[Kuaaak!]

“Demon, I'm already aware of all your patterns. Just from your appearance, I can see through your class, choice of weapon, method of attack, potential, and personality!”

Peruta's attack did not stop. His spear, feet, or empty hand! With each of his attacks, Shatuno's body exploded strangely. It even felt like Shatuno's fake body was stronger!

Peruta's blue whirlwind was enveloping my entire body. I realized. Peruta hadn't used his full power when he fought Shatuno before. The reason he used my skills to take him on was to save his own ability to fight Shatuno's real body.

"Unending whirlpool. The ancients called me War God and Heavenly Calamity, because the whirlpool connecting the earth and the heaven was strong enough to destroy the world."

Every time whirlpools erupted from parts of his body, Shatuno had to grit his teeth and fall back. Eventually, with a scream, he cut off his own tail, which had been half torn to shreds by Peruta's attacks. The tail was then absorbed into his whip, making the whip transform into a club.

[What did you do to me!? You think you can kill me, the demon's Army Commander, Shatuno Gluttony!?)

"Ha."

Peruta snorted. He held the Gluttony Spear in one hand and aimed it at Shatuno's neck, ignoring his club.

"Come here, Demon Soldier."

[Kuaaaaa!]

He appeared. Damn, even though I was confident in my senses, I couldn't completely grasp his movements. I could only see that he had appeared to my left and swung his club. I couldn't read the exact timing or the trajectory.

However, Peruta easily dodged his attack and sent a blue whirlwind forward, destroying his body. When I saw Shatuno's exploding flesh, I finally understood.

[Dear god... When you used Gale Track, you already...!]

[As expected of my disciple. 99 points. I took a point off since you didn't realize it at the time that I used the skill.]

Peruta retorted in a voice only I could hear, and leisurely continued to destroy Shatuno's body. He took a step back and stomped the ground strongly. His simple movements had a massive impact.

In a 10 meter radius around him, the earth transformed into lava and shot up. To the mercenaries watching Peruta and Shatuno's battle, it was like a bolt of lightning from the clear sky, and they scrambled to dodge the lava. However, Shatuno was no longer concerned with anyone else. He was solely focused on Peruta.

[I'll show you... the power of the Demon Army Commander!]

The lava took the form of a giant serpent. Shatuno lightly waved his hand, and the serpent dropped lava in its surrounding as it

charged toward us. Plus, it wasn't any slower than Shatuno himself.

At the same time, Shatuno stomped the ground again, and the ground that Peruta was standing on collapsed. I realized that Shatuno had been hiding his ability to transform earth.

However, I had full confidence in Peruta's victory. Peruta was right. He had weakened Shatuno. During his initial fight, he had realized Shatuno's special power. The moment he used Gale Track, Shatuno had no chance of victory.

[Kuhak!]

As expected, after jumping back to avoid the ground that had become lava, Peruta lightly sent a Tempest forward, blowing Shatuno's remaining arm away. Shatuno's weapon fell on the ground, turning the ground it touched into lava. Of course, the lava serpent that had been flying in the sky lost its power and fell, turning the ground more into a mess. When others saw the battlefield later, they would really wonder what the hell happened.

Shatuno seemed to have noticed something was wrong with his body too, as he glared at us with trembling eyes.

[Y-You... What did you do to my body!?!]

“When I hit the demons up with Gale Track, I did a little trick.”

Peruta answered with a grin. Right. When Shatuno used his strange melting power, Peruta realized he could use that power to absorb others. I didn't know until he told me, but Peruta had ample experience in fighting against demons and was able to recognize his special power with just that.

As such, after learning about Gale Track from me, he immediately went into action. He used his mana to put some sort of device into the demons before sending them flying. He then forced Shatuno into a situation where he had to absorb them. This was the result. Shatuno devoured his subordinates on his own accord, becoming Peruta's toy.

“You might be sensitive to any changes to your body, but you probably didn't expect that bombs would have been planted in your food. Can you feel it now?”

[You think such a crude game can kill me!?!]

Shatuno shouted in rage and did something completely unexpected. He began to detonate the mana bombs planted in the demons he absorbed! Explosions erupted from his body.

[I am the Demon Army's Commander Shatuno Gluttony! I can regenerate as long as I have more to eat! I am invincible! Under His Highness, the Demon Lord, I rule above all!]

“The moment you're under someone, you can't call yourself a ruler, Demon Soldier.”

Peruta responded coldly. Then, he thrust his spear. Shatuno's wing, which was trying to avoid Peruta and attack other mercenaries, was torn to shreds.

“As long as there's even a single being above you, you are only an underling.”

Shatuno didn't stop. He believed he could turn the tide of battle as long as he devoured someone. Disregarding Peruta's words, he continued. When Peruta's spear was pointed the other way, one of Shatuno's horns was torn off, falling on the ground. Shatuno screamed.

“Foolish. You cannot aim for the position of God that way. A true ruler has none above him and walks a path that no one can block.”

[Don't underestimate... the power of an Army Commander!]

“When you can stand on this land alone and hold up the heavens! That's when you can call yourself a ruler!”

Shatuno had somehow turned himself even redder and bigger, but the moment Peruta thrust out his spear, his body blew up without much resistance. Shatuno coughed out deep blue blood and collapsed. It happened quickly and overwhelmingly.

“Hu.”

Peruta twisted the corner of his mouth and threw the Gluttony

Spear. The spear struck Shatuno's forehead, splitting his head in half and penetrating the ground. Even if he was the Army's Commander, he could not survive with his heart in pieces and brain cut in half. Without even letting out death throes, Shatuno died.

“It is the path I once walked, and the path my disciple will walk. Remember it.”

[I don't think he can hear you anymore.]

[Haha, you're right.]

Peruta waved his hand lightly, and the Gluttony Spear flew back to his hand. Shatuno's corpse also flew toward him slowly. His arm, weapon, severed wing, and horn. Peruta was collecting them carefully. Watching the scene, the other mercenaries swallowed their saliva.

“Oi, newbie. Are you going to eat that by yourself?”

“There are portions for you guys too.”

The severed wing that was flying toward Peruta changed its direction and landed in front of the mercenaries. Looking at the mercenaries' blank expressions, Peruta spoke with a wink.

“The rest is for my disciple. Young kids have to eat a lot to grow. Since you guys are the seniors, you should yield.”

“Disciple, you say. Did you call your master, newbie...”

“Tsk. Since I can complete the mission thanks to you, I’ll listen.”

“Right, without him, we would’ve either died or failed the request... Alright, gather up. Let’s split this thing.”

While the mercenaries were dividing the wing equally, Peruta learned how to operate the inventory from me and stored Shatuno’s corpse in it. Then, it was the turn to store its arm, tail, and weapon, which probably ate many of his subordinates. Mm, would this count as an actual weapon? Since he used it as a one, it should, right?

[Peruta, can you touch that weapon with my spear?]

“Hm? Like this?”

Although Peruta was a bit surprised at my sudden request, he immediately did so. Then, the Gluttony Spear radiated a brilliant red light and absorbed the club.

[Crimson Gluttony Spear absorbed ‘Symbol of Gluttony (Epic)’. Growth: 54%]

[Oooh, so this weapon can grow by absorbing other weapons! There are still blacksmiths left that can craft such weapons?]

[Kuk, only 7% from eating an Epic-grade weapon... What kind of a weapon is this thing trying to become?]

[Haha, it probably won't meet your expectations. Growth type weapons have rather poor efficiency. But when it reaches its peak one day, it will become a divine artifact that most God-grade can't even compare. I don't know who made it, but this person must be your close friend. Treat him well.]

At Peruta words, the image of Lin appeared in my mind. Although handsome, he was frowning and smoking a cigarette. He was also cursing at the fact that I already became a Dimensional Mercenary. No, that's...

[Peruta, it seems all the danger is gone now.]

[Right. Besides the bountiful miasma in an area a day-long away from here, there's no danger.]

With Peruta's words, I felt assured. While I was at it, I asked him.

[Peruta, can you find out if there's a spy among them?]

[Hahaha, I'm not omnipotent. But since you have to worry about a spy, this must be quite a difficult mission.]

[To tell you the truth, we have to go into that area with bountiful miasma and rescue someone.]

[Hm? You want to save someone from that pit? Hoh... be careful.]

[Yes.]

[With your temperament, I probably don't need to worry much... but still, be careful. Don't believe anyone.]

[Haha, so that's the conclusion.]

After giving me tips on Peruta Circuit, Peruta left. I quickly drank a potion worth 50,000 gold that restored both mana and health.

“Hey, newbie. Is...”

“Yeah, he's not here now.”

“Huu... Good. I was slightly scared. Damn, where did you find a skill like that?”

“Ah, that idiot's at it again. Why are you digging at other's business secrets? Are you a newbie?”

The summoner mercenary smacked the man asking for my Deific

Manifestation skill. As he was the strongest mercenary out of the 8 that remained, the man didn't say anything after being hit. With a smirk, I called the only person I could trust, Ludia. Then, I sighed and fell to the ground.

When I got back up, thinking I sat on something, it was the headless corpse of Sirmia Bamirtuno.

“Tsk, right...”

She undoubtedly could have run away during battle. However, she seemed to have really liked Ludia, as she continued to fight the Army Commander until the end. Although I couldn't encourage her love, it was true that Ludia could survive thanks to her. Out of respect for her, I decided to put her corpse together.

As for the other mercenaries, they were gathering up the dead mercenaries, knights and magicians and burning them. They seemed to be taking their equipped items, but since the mission was more important than the people that were already dead, I didn't say anything.

Then, after 5 minutes of searching, I found her head. Putting it together with her body, I called Peika.

“Peika, leave the equipment and burn her body.”

[Okay!]

Sorry, Bamirtuno-ssi, but I'm an explorer too... After Peika cleanly burned Bamirtuno's body with her elemental power, her equipment shone. Oh, the hoverboard was there too, but...

The hoverboard began to greedily devour Bamirtuno's equipment.

“Peika, am I seeing things?”

[No, that child must have been hungry because she was just born.]

Child? Born? While Peika was answering nonchalantly, the hoverboard continued to devour Bamirtuno's weapon. I mean, if it was eating something, shouldn't it be getting bigger? Why is it getting smaller instead? Its silvery grey color became darker. After devouring all the equipment Bamirtuno left behind, it became a black, metallic elliptical ball.

Just in case, I took out an arrow from my inventory and tried poking it, but it did not budge in the slightest. Instead, I felt a strange sensation. It was incredibly familiar, and touched the deepest part of my soul. This...

“Is this an elemental!? Plus, this feeling... It feels like it's connected to me.”

[Yep. I think this child was influenced and created by my elemental power. In the process, master obviously got connected...

but because it's still a child and it became full, it fell into deep slumber. Master should sing a lullaby.]

Peika, if I sing a lullaby, it will only fall deeper into sleep. To wake it, we'll at least need a bugle horn...

[No! It was just born, so it needs time to grow! Master has to sing a lullaby, so it can sleep well!]

“Ah, so that's what you meant?”

For the next few minutes, I hugged the metallic egg and sang a lullaby, making Ludia who came back stare at me with strange eyes. I didn't know how to feel as a few of the mercenaries listening to me also fell asleep. I didn't sing so you guys could sleep!

Author's note:

I'm crazy, really. How the hell did this become 9,000 characters... It's hard to control... Hu...

I didn't want to spend another chapter with Shatuno, so I made this one long as well. I don't know anymore. I'll get scolded one day...

There are lots of avaricious things devouring things in this chapter! Do I need to read it again when I'm hungry!?

Chapter 120. Avarice Devours Everything

(7)

After fighting the Demon Army's elites, we had lost many people. Including me, there were 9 Dimensional Mercenaries left, but 21 knights had died and 7 of the surviving ones had received grave injuries preventing them from continuing. There were also only 4 magicians left. With 12 knights, 4 magicians, Bellode, and Ludia, there were 27 people left. If there was anything to be relieved about, it was that most of the knights and magicians were First Dungeon explorers.

That said, we still had a chance. In fact, with the Army Commander defeated, we would be able to rescue Shina before the Demon Army could reorganize themselves. As such, there was still some fighting spirit left in everyone.

However, the fact that the Demon Lord couldn't move got on my mind. Could he really not move? In that case, couldn't we kill him with our strength? Was the Demon Lord really heavily injured from the Hero?

"There's no choice but to go on."

Ludia nodded her head at my words. Right, we had no other choice but to go on. Even though we knew there was a spy within the knights or the magicians, we couldn't say we would separate, as that would only split up our strengths. As I could at least trust the Dimensional Mercenaries, I wanted to complete the mission with their cooperation. However, it wouldn't be so easy.

Something had to be done. I couldn't ignore Peruta's words.

"But Ludia, we can't just keep going like this."

"What do you mean? Didn't you just say it was okay?"

"I just want to get an insurance. Will you hear me out?"

"... Yeah?"

Around dinner time, Bellode's words made us tense up.

"We'll arrive soon. They must be planning on staying here for the night. They set up a temporary camp and are resting. Tonight's our chance... We won't be able to stop clashing. We will make a feint operation."

"That sounds interesting."

One team to sneak into their camp and save Shina and the explorers that turned into stone. One team to attack from the front and draw attention to themselves. There was also a team to pretend to be sneaky to disperse the demons' suspicions.

Bellode, me, the summoner, and a magician from Shina's team, who had the ability to detect her party members' locations, joined the rescue team. Three knights, two magicians, and two

mercenaries joined the secondary covert team, and the rest joined the frontal assault team.

“Demon bastards, we’ve come to take your heads!”

“Demon Soldiers, stop running away like cowards and come fight!”

Burning the monsters on guard magnificently, we set our plan into motion. The magician first cast stealth magic on all of the covert teams.

“Be careful. Although the magic erases your presence, smell, and appearance, if demons and monsters lay their eyes on you, they will soon discover you.”

“So you mean we have to kill them quickly.”

I pushed back my hair and nodded. For the record, the metallic egg was in Fairy Garden with Ruyue. For some reason, it wouldn’t go into my inventory!

It could be because it was alive, but at first, when it didn’t go into the inventory, I was afraid I might need to hold onto it the entire time. Thankfully, Ruyue was able to take it to Fairy Garden. Although Peika said it was better for me to hold onto it, I couldn’t do so in the middle of such a dangerous operation, so I left it to Ruyue’s care.

“We’ll be starting now.”

The secondary covert team went in a bit earlier than us, the main covert team. Soon, we also sneaked in. Dozens of tents and monsters passed by us. Putting our trust in the magician’s ability, we walked forward. The magician in question was on Bellode’s back. She was continuously detecting Shina’s location and whispering her position to Bellode. However, her cheeks were red. Was she flirting in the middle of the operation!?

“Can you feel the Demon Lord’s presence?”

“He’s in the center-most area. He’s tightly guarded too, but even in all the ruckus, he’s not moving.”

“What about Shina?”

“It seems that the explorers that turned to stone didn’t need to be placed near the Demon Lord. Although there are quite a lot of personnel on guard, we should be able to save them without much trouble.”

“When we’re escaping, we can let them ride on my wyvern. But there’s still one problem.”

The summoner spoke.

“Is there a way to turn them back from stone?”

“We can think about that later. We have to save them first.”

Bellode save with a stiff voice. The summoner seemed to be convinced by the urgency in his voice as he shrugged.

Although I had a plan in mind, I didn't say anything. If things didn't work out, I would feel bad. After finishing our discussion, we quickly walked forward. Although my clothes were uncomfortable, I endured it and followed behind Bellode.

“Kyaaa.”

“Human... smell?”

“When is the Army Commander-nim coming back?”

More and more monsters and demons were in the pathway. My body shook from the tension during battle. Although we could kill these guys as we advanced... For now, I had to hold myself back as saving Shina was our priority. Of course, fights did break out from time to time.

“Eh, here!”

“Die!”

When we met demons or monsters in narrows pathways, we had

to hastily take care of them and move on. The summoner was of great help, as his main class was archer. He consecutively shot out arrows with bountiful aura, which killed the demons quickly. It seemed to be a skill of his. It was truly quick and precise.

“Looks like the other teams are doing well.”

We heard explosions and screams from parts of the military camp. Hoping for the other team’s safety, we hastened our steps. Soon, we reached the tent where Shina and the other explorers were imprisoned. As expected, there were dozens of demons guarding the place. It seemed they planned to use them as hostages in their fight against the empire.

“What do we do?”

“As we planned, I’ll go.”

“K-Kuhum... Gladly.”

I walked up confidently. My appearance changed with each step. My white skin turned into black, tough and muscled skin, while horns shot out from my head and my hair was dyed black. Seeing me walk up so confidently, the demons became flustered.

“A-Army Commander-nim!?”

“Army Commander-nim, do you need something? We haven’t received any word that you’d be visiting.”

“What? I definitely sent a message.”

“But...! We haven’t heard that you’ve come back yet. Did you bring the crown princess back?”

“That bitch hid. We’ll need to use the hostages more aggressively.”

“Army Commander-nim, that’s...”

I reached out and grabbed the head of the demon that talked back to me.

“... Do you want to taste the honor of becoming my blood and flesh?”

“N-No, sir!”

“I, Shatuno, am the absolute ruler under His Highness, the Demon Lord. You dare to talk back to me? You’ve gotten bolder!”

“No, sir!”

“You must have heard that we have intruders! I will take care of the hostages from now. You guys focus on guarding His Highness!”

“Yes, sir!”

The demons all bowed and disappeared beyond the pathway. I snorted and thought.

‘This skill, it can even alter my way of talking!’

It said I would absolutely not get discovered, but to think it would have such effect! I thought I could call my plan a success if I could just trick them for this one moment, but I didn’t think it would work so well. God bless Zeus!

“Amazing.”

“I thought that damned demon came back to life.”

After confirming that the demons’ presence disappeared completely, I returned to my allies. Giving them a grin, I went back to the appearance I had before. Right. I had been using Sky God’s Play.

“But, the next part worries me a bit...”

“Why?”

At my question, Bellode couldn’t continue and shut his mouth. However, his eyes clearly showed unhappiness. As it was none of my business, I ignored it and entered the tent with them.

She was there. Shina, who had been petrified, was there! Happily yelling inwardly, I urged everyone on.

“We don’t have a lot of time. We’re going to confirm that everyone’s here and escape!”

“Right! Eight people, including Shina-nim. They’re all here!”

“They will notice us leaving, right?”

“Let’s just keep going! It won’t be possible to secretly leave with them anyways! Hurry up and put them on!”

Although we tricked the demons away, it won’t be long until they found out. The summoner summoned his wyvern and fixed the petrified explorers on. As they were alive, they wouldn’t enter the inventory.

As such, we had to sweat to get them out of here. It would be nice if I could just use Return and bring them to Earth with me, but as they belonged to the Luka continent, that wasn’t possible. It was quite irritating.

But... in my dream, I remembered that I returned to Earth with Ludia. How did my dream self do that...?

While we were putting the petrified explorers on the wyvern, the

magician calmly shot up a flare. It tore the tent and rose up high into the sky, signifying that we had successfully rescued the explorers.

“Get on! You too, newbie!”

“I’m coming even if you don’t urge me!”

I held Shina in my embrace and got on the wyvern last. The wyvern breathed out fire, burning everything in its path as it flapped its huge wings.

“Wyvern!”

“A wyvern appeared inside the camp!”

“Damn it, there were intruders here too!”

Uproar began to ring out from all sides. We could see demons running toward us, holding their weapons or tails.

“Kuk, they took the hostages!”

“Shoot them down!”

“Fools, be careful when you shoot!”

The wyvern soared into the sky. However, the wyvern was hit by two of the demons' magic attacks, causing it to scream.

“Those sons of bitches!”

“Crown princess! The crown princess is on it!”

It seemed they were focusing on us more than we thought. In an instant, dozens of demons flocked toward us, confusing us. The summoner took out his bow, while the magician shot magic and Bellode shot aura blades with his sword. Even so, it was not enough to deal with all the demons.

“Wyvern, quicker!”

“Damn, they put up a barrier of mana! It's going to take time to break through it!”

“We need to buy time...!”

The summoner could not help, as he was busy putting in mana into his wyvern to break through the barrier. The magician was also focused on breaking the barrier. Damn, a magical device like this wasn't there when we sneaked in!

“It looks like a barrier that you can activate once you know there are intruders. It's not that it's out of our expectations, but...”

“It’s too strong! Demons usually don’t cast barriers like this... At this rate, we’ll be shot down!”

“Huu, damned spies. I have to take care of this too?”

I sighed and took out Gluttony Spear from my inventory. Then, I looked at Shina in my embrace and spoke.

“Summon Caduceus. Sky God’s Rage!”

[You summoned Caduceus. All physical abilities have been enhanced. Two snakes have opened their eyes. You may only use the power of one of them.]

[Sky God’s Rage has been imbued into the weapon in your hand. You can deliver a single powerful blow, or distribute the power in multiple attacks.]

In my hand not holding the spear, particles of light began to gather. Like a snake crawling up a tree, two rays of light crawled up my arm in a spiral and a pair of wings grew on my back. At the same time, the Gluttony Spear let out a radiant light and transformed to a golden lightning bolt. My allies looking at me opened their eyes widely.

“Newbie, you...!”

“If you tell anyone, I’ll kill you.”

With words that even I found arrogant, I tightened my grip on the lightning bolt and thrust it towards the barrier blocking us.

BOOM!

“Again!”

CRACK!

With just two hits, an explosive crack rang out. With a satisfied smile, I shot out the lightning bolt again. The sound I was expecting was released. The sound of hundreds of windows shattering rang out. Seeing the demons’ shocked faces below satisfied me even more.

“Wvyern, go!”

[Guaaaaaaa!]

“Eh, why is he listening to her... him!”

“Don’t let them escape!”

“Someone report to the Demon Lord-nim!”

“Capture the other intruders!”

While still sending magic toward us, demons were scattering. I shot my lightning bolt, which still had some power remaining, at them. Although I wanted to throw the spear, retrieving it would be difficult, so I simply sent the lightning energy in my spear flying. A few of the demons turned into ash and disappeared. At the same time, the energy imbued by Sky God’s Rage had completely disappeared from the spear. Feeling refreshed, I put the spear back into my inventory.

“Alright, let’s run now!”

“You sure are scary...”

The wyvern soared through the sky. Although many of the Demon Army’s monsters flew in the sky, the others were more than capable of dealing with them. After all, they were all First Dungeon explorers that were at least level 70.

“What about the other teams? Have you tried messaging them?”

“Two of the Dimensional Mercenaries escaped to the dungeon. Four knights and two magicians died. The rest managed to escape the camp.”

The summoner replied, looking more relaxed as he controlled his wyvern. The wyvern continued to breathe out fire at the flying monsters. No matter how I thought about it, his wyvern was

unusually strong.

Meanwhile, I stretched my neck.

“The petrified people are all tied well, right?”

“Other than the princess in your hand, then yeah.”

“Good. Then should we do it now?”

“Do what?”

“You’ll see.” With that, I stretched my neck again. Then, I shouted.

“Uwaaaaaaaak!”

[You used Orc Lord’s Warcry! All party members are cleansed of negative status effects. All party members’ attack power increases by 50 percent for the duration. All party members become super-armored, unfazed by enemy attacks.]

Startled by my shouting, the wyvern screamed and flapped its wings violently. The others were also surprised by my shouting and turned my way to say something, only to get shocked.

“Mm? Mmm...”

Shina, who was in my arms, regained her normal complexion. Not only her, but all the petrified explorers tied to the wyvern snapped out of their status effects.

“W-What did you... No, nevermind. Excuse me.”

“Huhuhu.”

‘Even if I told you guys, there’s nothing you can do.’ I murmured inwardly. The petrification was a type of status effect. It could be canceled with Orc Lord’s Warcry. I was now fully ready to agree that Orc Lord’s Warcry was the world’s most cheaty skill.

Smiling brightly, I checked Shina’s state. She was still wearing the armor she wore during the battle. With her eyes open, she was looking at me with surprised eyes.

“Shina, are you okay?”

“... Unni? You came to save me? Really?”

“Yeah.”

Shina’s eyes opened widely. Then, looking at me, who was taking Ludia’s appearance, she laughed.

“So unni really... Huhu. Thanks, unni.”

I was lost for words at her incredibly beautiful smile. Drawn by her smile, I also smiled. Shina's next action was like flowing water.

“And... good bye.”

She took out a sword. The sword's body, the sword's guard, and the sword's pommel were all emanating an eerie black aura. Then, she stabbed it in my stomach.

Author's note:

1. I wonder if there are any readers who didn't realize that Shin was disguising himself as Ludia. Probably not, right? With all the hints I gave...

2. It seems like not a lot of people thought Shina was a traitor. Someone actually guessed it from what Peruta said in the last chapter. I got frightened and replied mysteriously. I don't know if it worked...

By the way, there were many hints. Like the emperor telling him not to trust anyone besides Ludia and Bellode; the fact that Shina, who should've been faster than Ludia, stood still and got petrified while Ludia escaped (though Ludia thought that it was because she was just faster T.T); or as the last chapter said, Peruta telling Shin not to trust anyone...

Stupid Shina, you got tricked... does she still look like your sister...?

Now, why was Shin taking Ludia's appearance!? Why did he hold Shina in his embrace, fully knowing that something was wrong with Shina? Did he want to embrace a girl even if it cost him his life!? The answer will come out in the next chapter.

PS – Shin's cape has the effect of blocking ambush attacks three times per day. It will be explained in the beginning of next chapter, but he cannot use his equipment skills when he's using Sky God's Play, so that's why he couldn't block her attack. Of course, even if he could use the effect, the difference in the equipment's power wouldn't make that possible.

Chapter 121. Avarice Devours Everything (8)

My cape's effect, ambush defense, could not be used in Ludia's appearance. Although I retained all my abilities, it did not include my equipment's effects. As such, I could only let the sword stab into me helplessly.

[You have been stabbed with the legendary weapon, Soul Sucker, crafted with the Demon Lord's power. If you do not receive peak-grade treatment, you will soon be killed! All party members fall in 'shameful obedience' status effect. Orc Lord's Warcry attempts to resist it. Without enough resistance left, it fails!]

So Orc Lord's Warcry could fail too!? The reason it didn't have enough resistance had to be because it canceled all the petrification. Since the petrification was a status effect casted by the Demon Lord, it was understandable. In fact, it would have been more surprising if Orc Lord's Warcry could have resisted the status effect again.

"I didn't think you would grit your teeth and come save me... But I'm happy I got to use this sword, unni."

"Cough."

"But still, I'm surprised. I thought you'd get caught before it became my turn. We planted quite a lot of spies among the knights, you see. Ah, by now, the Demon Army should have

invaded the Imperial Palace too. The demons that usually only stay in the Demon Lord's territory have been sent out, knowing that this is the best opportunity. Elite forces sent to save me. Without them, what would have happened to the Imperial Palace... to father and mother? I don't think the ruler of an empire would run away to the dungeon, so do you think he got captured?"

I coughed up blood. Excruciating pain swept over me. It was as if my soul was being sucked in by the sword. The party members tried to approach me, but I shook my head once and gave them a glance. It was the signal to execute the plan we made for the 'what if' we talked about. Bellode shook his head in pain, but the magician and the summoner were different. They immediately sprung into action. Although they seemed to be in pain from the status effect, the order I gave them was extremely simple.

Thinking that victory was in her grasp, Shina continued.

"What don't you say something, unni? Like since when or why I went to the Demon Lord's side. Or if the Demon Lord brainwashed me. Don't you have a lot to say?"

"What is it that you want?"

Shina seemed to be surprised by my straightforward question. She curled one corner of her mouth up and responded.

"It's the seat next to the Demon Lord, unni. A seat where I can obtain everything in the world... He allowed me to be beside him. Of course, with one additional condition. The power of Kang Shin,

the other world's Hero. You know how greedy I am, right, unni? The Demon Lord took my offer of the power of another world's Hero. He also saw me in high regard. You see, we suit each other rather well."

"So... because of your avarice, you cooperated with him in destroying the Ehuir Empire, killing me, and offering Shin to the Demon Lord? Leaving his own world to end?"

"Yep. What, are you trying to contact him? Give up, unni. This sword's power is amazing. The only thing unni is allowed to do is to curse at me to make the short time you have left worth it. You probably can't open your inventory either."

It really didn't open. I let her know that there were others with my eyes, but Shina was still full of leisure.

"Didn't I tell you, unni? This is a weapon imbued with the Demon Lord's power. Everyone here is no longer allowed any freedom. At the very least, everything they could do as explorers has been sealed. Plus, the ones unni saved are also...!"

Shina talked as she turned her head, and was shocked. Other than Bellode, who was gritting his teeth and closing his eyes, the summoner and the magician's actions had shocked her.

Seven explorers, who were tied so well that they couldn't even open the door to the dungeon, had fallen from the wyvern's back. Currently in free fall, they were screaming.

“Kuaaaaaak!”

“Y-Your Highness!”

Since both their hands and feet were tied, they were fated to hit the ground without doing anything. Of course, they couldn't escape to the dungeon.

The moment I realized Shina was hit by the Demon Lord's magic on purpose, the chances that other petrified explorers were also traitors became extremely high. The moment Shina's words confirmed it, the party members had thrown them off the wyvern. Having to kill the people we came to save... It was a truly unpleasant feeling.

“You guys!”

“They'll probably die.”

At my short words, Shina gave a flustered look, but soon swept aside her bangs and sighed.

“Hu... I don't care what happens to them. They were only there to make it more believable that I was captured by the Demon Lord. What's important is that you and the others can't do anything to me.”

She seemed to be telling the truth. Even after dropping the seven explorers, the summoner and the magician couldn't approach me.

It seemed like the sword in my stomach was preventing them somehow. If they forced themselves, they might be the ones to fall off the wyvern instead. It must be the ‘shameful obedience’ status effect they got when the sword stabbed through me. Just by attacking one person, the whole party was suppressed! I knew it was imbued with the Demon Lord’s power, but what was this weapon!? At that moment, while I was feeling my vitality reaching its limit, a message rang out in ear, surprising me.

[Diehard activates. All injuries have been restored and your vitality is restored to 50% of its maximum.]

[Soul Sucker’s power prevents healing! If you do not receive peak-grade holy recovery in the next 2 minutes, you will die!]

Without even knowing that Diehard had activated, Shina smiled confidently and spoke.

“Huhu, this sword is also the proof of contract between us. It is the power that he bestowed upon me. Be glad, unni. Unni loves Kang Shin, right? He will be stabbed with the same sword. With this sword, I will rob the world of its power. How is it? Are you happy that you will die in the same way as your lover?”

“Kuu, this hurts... There’s one thing I want to say.”

With this, I probably heard everything I could with Ludia's appearance. I immediately canceled Sky God's Play.

In an instant, my height grew taller, my hair got shorter, and my voice became thicker. My two arms, which were still holding onto Shina, changed from the slender arms of a frail girl to healthy, muscled arms. Likely because of Soul Sucker, I wasn't wearing my equipment and was only wearing my underwear. Because of the sword stuck in my stomach, my underwear got dyed in red. Without joking, it was an intense pain.

"I'm not your unni, Shina."

Shina's eyes opened widely.

"Oppa!?"

"Bellode, the request has been complete. Do you accept it?"

"... Kuuk, the request... Sorry, but even so, I can't do it...!"

"Really? But I don't think it's up to you anymore."

The moment I said that, a fanfare rang in my ear.

[Request complete! Although the requester did not lie, the target of the request has become the world's enemy. As of this

moment, all Dimensional Mercenaries that have carried out the request will be treated as if the request has been completed. It is recommended that you return to your dimension as soon as possible.]

[You obtained 8 stats points as the request's reward!]

8 points. It was quite a lot. However, I couldn't open my status window at the moment, so I couldn't use the points that I had obtained with difficulty.

Shina was visibly surprised by the fact that I had changed from Ludia's appearance, but after realizing that the sword was still stuck in my stomach, she regained her composure.

“Oppa, you already became a Dimensional Mercenary? I never even imagined it. Plus, you were disguising yourself as unni too... It's quite unfortunate that I couldn't kill unni here, but at least you made it easy for me. I can fulfill my side of the contract with the Demon Lord now.”

“As I thought, I wasn't your fated partner.”

“Geez, oppa. My fated partner isn't a childish rookie like you. It's the Demon Lord.”

Didn't Ludia say her clan's eyes allowed them to find partners

that would let the empire flourish? It seemed there was a mistake. For example, instead of a flourishing empire, it could be flourishing descendants. With her fated partner being the Demon Lord, it was understandable that she'd be excited. Especially since she even suppressed me with such a powerful weapon.

At this point, I was completely certain. I wanted to believe that the Demon Lord had brainwashed her, but all the negative status effects on her should have disappeared when I used Orc Lord's Warcry. Since she lied about her fated partner being me... she must have been conspiring with the Demon Lord for a long time.

“So Shina, do you hate me so much that you want to kill me?”

“Hm... To be honest, I thought you'd be a good boyfriend. You're handsome, strong, and kind.”

“Thanks for the compliment. By the way, Shina, I came here to save you. Although I was in Ludia's appearance, I hoped that you were fine.”

This was the truth. If possible, I wanted to save Shina and go back. I wanted to complete my first mission without much problem, and I didn't want to see Shina rebelling against Ludia and the imperial family. I didn't want to see Ludia's crying face, and I didn't want her to hate me. But...

“But oppa is a Hero, right? Setting aside whether you like it or not, you have to sacrifice yourself for my future. Please just take this as your fate.”

“I see, so everything is ‘fate’... In truth, Shina, our conversation until now has been insignificant.”

“What?”

Sorry, Ludia.

But I have no intention of letting someone who tried to kill me live.

“Caduceus.”

The snake spiraling around my arm opened its eyes. It was scorched black, then it scattered into pieces.

[As your target has a lower level than you, you reflect all injuries inflicted by the target.]

“Kuhuk!?”

Shina grabbed her stomach and groaned. I touched my stomach, and confirmed that the sword was no longer stuck in it. My health was back to normal as well. The state of my body was so perfect that even I found it strange.

Putting mana into my bracelet, I put on my armor. Then, I checked how my allies were doing. As expected, they had escaped the status effect and were making confused expressions. Seeing Shina's state, Bellode ran toward me, but the summoner smacked his head first with his bow imbued with aura.

"This guy really is stupid. Even with what she did to him..."

"Kuk...."

"Kahak!"

Shina coughed out black blood and raised her head to look at me. The sword stuck to her stomach was giving off a black aura. Just watching it made me shiver in fear, especially when I thought that it was inside of me until just now.

"This, what did... you..."

"Shina. In my country, we call it the retribution of karma."

I explained to her coldly.

"I simply returned what you did to me."

"How? The Demon Lord's power... And Unni..."

“You justified murder for your avarice, right?”

‘As for me, I will kill you for my justice.’

“Kuhuk... o-oppa, save me. Plea...”

It went without saying that I had never killed a human being. I had killed monsters like eating rice. I had even killed demons after coming here. Right, I had even killed chimeras, who were made using humans.

However, I had never killed a human being. Set aside the question of whether humans and other lives have different values. It wasn't a matter of value. There was an inherent resistance to murdering humans, who were the same existences as me. It was the resistance that humans naturally had.

However, I surprisingly accepted myself trying to kill Shina naturally. She tried to kill her older sister. She wanted to betray her continent and embrace the Demon Lord. She agreed to the plan of killing her own parents.

No, that wasn't the reason. I wasn't trying to kill her for such a complicated reason. It was simpler.

It was because she was my enemy and she tried to kill me.

To kill her, I didn't need any other reason.

“Kuk... Kuhuk!”

“Huu.”

Once I had organized my thoughts, I was quick to move. I took my spear out of my inventory and brought it to the demonic sword stuck in her stomach. Although the demonic sword must have belonged to Shina, that was no longer the case as it had dealt critical damage to Shina. In fact, it was likely that it was now mine.

As expected, my spear easily absorbed the demonic sword, which was happily sucking away her soul.

[Crimson Gluttony Spear absorbed Soul Sucker. Growth: 87%]

It had a lower grade than the holysword. How amazing was the holysword when it was at its full strength? While pondering, I stared at Shina, who was gasping for breath.

“O-Oppa.”

“You’re trying to open the dungeon.”

The moment I felt her resistance, I summoned my elementals. Peika and Ruyue appeared on my shoulders the moment I called

them. With a grunt, Ruyue was holding up the egg with her small body, but I pretended not to see it and order her.

“Tie her.”

[Okay!]

In an instant, Shina's hands and feet were frozen. With the demonic sword gone, she was no longer my opponent. Having lost her way to resist and escape, she only looked at me with blank eyes.

“O-Oppa. W-What did you do with the sword?”

Without answering her, I held my spear up. Peika and I also didn't need to exchange words. She naturally infused herself into the Gluttony Spear, giving it golden flickers of lightning. Shina put on an urgent expression.

“Oppa, you took away the sword to save me, right?”

“Wrong.”

Without even a shred of hesitation, I struck down with my spear.

“I got rid of the sword, so I won't make disgraceful excuses later that I didn't personally kill you.”

I will bear the weight of my crimes. I won't make excuses that I only returned the injuries she gave me. I labeled her as my enemy, and thus I cut her. I will continue to do so.

My spear cut Shina in half and the lightning energy in my spear burned the two halves of her corpse to crisp. I destroyed Shina completely, so that she cannot be revived as undead.

With my own hands, I killed Ludia's sister.

The fact that it felt the same as killing a monster was sad and scary.

Author's note:

You can't effectively deal with the Demon Lord with Floor Masters' powers? Then use God's powers!

By taking on Ludia's appearance, Shin was able to hear everything from Shina. If he was in his own appearance, it would have been hard. Things would have gotten much more complicated.

This is the highlight of this arc. Shin has killed a person for the first time. I thought a lot to write this part, but there was no reason for Shin, who was resolute and clear on distinguishing between friend and foe, to let Shina live. Shina was his acquaintance and Shin had even come for her. Because of the effort he put in, he couldn't forgive her for what she did to him.

Retrieving foreshadowing and making new ones. You will see how it all ends in the next chapter.

Chapter 122. Avarice Devours Everything

(9)

The wyvern did not return to the palace, but stopped half-way and dropped us off. It was the rendezvous point we set beforehand.

Ludia, who had gone to hide in the dungeon at my request, returned and was already waiting there. Others who had safely escaped the demons' camp were also gathered. As my team was escaping, the ruckus we caused by breaking the barrier had drawn much attention away from the others, letting them escape more easily.

“What was that message about world’s enemy?”

“Didn’t you go rescue them? Why are you alone?”

The Dimensional Mercenaries approached me and asked questions. However, I raised my hand and stopped them.

“Ludia, first, get away from the knights.”

“What? Kyak!”

The moment I said so, the knights made their move. It wasn’t to protect Ludia, but to capture her. Come on! All the surviving knights were traitors!? Even the magicians...!

“They’re all traitors!”

I shouted sharply and used Divine Speed. I stabbed my spear into the knight trying to restrain Ludia and held her in one arm. Then I jumped back, all of which only happened in 3 seconds.

“What just happened!?”

“Newbie, you’re really fast...!”

“Kuk!”

They were quick to understand the situation. The moment I rescued Ludia, they tried to escape to the dungeon. When I tried to capture them with Ruyue’s power...

[Explorers that betrayed their world and joined the world’s enemy have been kicked out of the dungeon.]

[Their abilities as explorers have been recollected.]

What? I narrowed my eyes. What was this message saying? Why was the dungeon doing this now?

The knights and magicians, who were trying to open the dungeon, suddenly collapsed. It was likely because they had lost

their strength. The Dimensional Mercenaries didn't miss this opportunity. Without a shred of hesitation, they attacked the traitors' vital points and killed them.

“Why did the dungeon figure out they were the world's enemies now?”

[The dungeon's system automatically provides experience calculation, inventory, and item drops to all explorers, but it cannot focus on specific explorers all the time. Moreover, finding explorers that joined the world's enemy in a world where their forces are strong is close to impossible. As such, Dimensional Mercenaries serve as eyes of the dungeon to find explorers that betrayed their own worlds.]

“You're smart, message noona...”

Message noona who satisfied my curiosity did not reply to my words of astonishment. It seemed the other Dimensional Mercenaries already knew about this. Since they killed the traitors so resolutely, there must be rewards for killing the traitors too...

[All traitors have been killed. Rewards will be distributed appropriately.]

[The lover of the Demon Lord was killed. You obtained 5 stat points and 2 skill points as reward. Stats point gained: 13. Skill

points gained: 2]

Tsk, I didn't want such a bittersweet reward. Seeing my complexion turn dark at the message, Ludia, who was watching me, became startled and separated from me. She then asked.

"Shina, where's Shina?"

"... Ludia."

"Shin, where's Shina?"

I pointed at the wyvern. On its back was the burnt up corpse of Shina. When Ludia saw the corpse, she didn't say anything.

"We confirmed it. Shina was... an enemy."

"That's... a lie."

"Newbie's telling the truth. If it wasn't for him, we would have all died. Damn, that demonic sword still makes me shiver."

"Shina had... a demonic sword?"

"Yeah."

I nodded my head. Ludia slowly approached the wyvern and pulled the corpse down. Seeing the corpse cut into two halves, she became speechless. I couldn't help but talk to her.

“... Ludia.”

“Who... Who killed her?”

“I did.”

I told her the truth. She shut her eyes tightly then opened them.

“Don't lie and tell me the truth.”

“I killed her. Shina tried to kill me, who had transformed into you.”

“Please... Don't lie!”

“... Sorry, but I'm not lying to you. I killed her, Ludia.”

Ludia's lips trembled. She opened her mouth then closed it again, as if to say something. Then, she glared at me.

“What is this?”

“Ludia.”

“What is this!?”

Ludia shouted louder than I had ever heard her before.

“Is this what you wanted? Making me escape to the dungeon because it was dangerous, taking my appearance, almost dying to Shina, then killing her? I was waiting for you in the dungeon without knowing anything. Like a clueless idiot! What am I supposed to do after hearing this? What is this!?”

“I didn’t want this either. I didn’t want it to be true!”

“I should’ve gone with you. Like I first thought, I should have gone with you! Even if Shina killed me, I should have gone! I had to see it with my own eyes and experience it for myself!”

“You would have died!”

“I’d rather die! Because you protected me, I became the world’s biggest idiot, fool, and blockhead! Is this what you wanted? Did you want me to obediently stay in the dungeon because you said it was dangerous, then crawl out when everything was over, see my sister’s corpse, and nod my head and say it couldn’t be helped since she was a traitor!?”

“I did!”

I also shouted.

“It’s better than you dying! I didn’t want to lose my friend. Is that bad?”

“Because you tried to protect me, I lost my authority as a member of the Imperial family, my pride as an explorer, and even my qualification to be your friend! Because I was afraid of my sister being a traitor, I became a coward, who left my friend to go save my sister and hid in the dungeon!”

“And what’s wrong with that!? You don’t understand your priorities!”

“You’re the one who can’t understand! Look at me! Both mother and father were killed, but hiding in that small house in the dungeon, I couldn’t even see Shina die with my own eyes. And I had to hear that my sister’s killer was none other than you!”

“What...?”

“I don’t have anything anymore! I have nothing at all! There’s nothing to protect, there’s no reason to live! I would have rather died to Shina. I would have rather protected you and died! That way, I could have at least protected my friend!”

The emperor and the empress died? I wanted to say something, but I was lost for words. I remembered what Shina said, that the highest ranking demons had gone to attack the Imperial Palace...

Did the emperor and empress leave behind a will for her? Did they meet an honorable end? I didn't know whether to be sad or happy at the fact that they at least didn't experience torture without being able to die like in my dreams.

Leaving my speechless self behind, Ludia fell on the ground helplessly. Then, with a barely audible voice, she murmured.

“Sorry, Shin. Sorry... Sorry for only sending you... I'm the one that made you kill Shina with your hands, I'm the one...”

Seeing her suddenly change from condemning me, I became flustered. She wasn't mentally stable at the moment. After thinking about what to say, I replied in a quiet voice.

“... It's what I wanted.”

“I'm the worst. I'm worthless. I'm a clueless fool, who gets scared at the most critical moments and can only let others do my job. I don't have the qualification to be royalty, to be an explorer, or even to live...”

“Ludia, don't say that!”

“I hate you. I can't help but hate you. I hate myself. I hate myself for hating you...”

“Ludia, you need rest. I beg you, don’t think about anything and just rest. If you hate me, I can disappear. I understand why you would hate me, so I’ll go away so that you won’t see me anymore.”

“No!”

Ludia suddenly shouted. Her eyes were full of fear.

“You stole my sister from me, and you even want to take away what I have left?”

“Ludia...”

Was Ludia talking about me? Startled by her words, I stood still without knowing what to say. She staggered up and approached me. Holding on to my arms, she looked up. Her blue eyes were glistening with tears.

“No, Shin. Don’t. Please... You’re the only one I have left. I lost mother, father, and Shina. I don’t want to lose you too... Sorry. I won’t hate you, so please don’t leave. Please...”

Ludia had gotten weak. That’s what I thought. She was mentally pushed to the point she would cling to me, who had killed her sister. Since the day Shina was captured by the Demon Lord, or at least thought to be captured, she was broken. The wound she had patched under the goal of rescuing Shina had burst, leaving her helpless.

“No, don’t go. Don’t leave me alone...”

“She’s having a mental panic attack. Thinking that the world would collapse leaving her alone or that she is now worthless... It’s common among explorers that lost their worlds. At least, she still has you... Newbie, you better think carefully before you act.”

The summoner mercenary spoke bitterly. Then, he disappeared using Return. The other mercenaries disappeared one by one. I couldn’t blame them. Once the demons occupied the Imperial Palace, they would be coming for us next. It was the correct choice to go back as quickly as possible.

In the end, only Ludia and I were left in the field. Our surrounding was strangely quiet, almost as if something would suddenly pop out.

“Alright... In that case, I’ll stay by your side. Even if you hate me, I’ll stay with you. I won’t hate you.”

“I hate you, but... thank you... hic.”

Ludia held me and cried silently. I patted her back, feeling a sense of unease. What would happen to the two of us? Would we be able to stay as friends? This dangerous relationship, will it be able to hold on without crumbling down?

Embracing her, that was all I could think about as she cried.

“Shina’s corpse. Burn it.”

Once she stopped crying, that was the first thing Ludia said. She was still clinging to my arm. I couldn’t joke around like I usually would.

“Please, get rid of the traces of Shina.”

“... I’ll do it.”

When I was about to burn her corpse, a voice rang out behind me. Now that I thought about it, there was someone here. It was Bellode. I was wondering where he was, but he had been collapsed on the ground the entire time after being hit by the summoner. Did he just wake up and realize what happened...? I suddenly felt sorry for him.

“I want to send her off... Please, Your Highness.”

“Bellode... Fine. You can do as you’d like.”

Ludia made a surprised expression, but soon nodded her head with a bitter expression. Bellode nodded respectfully, then slowly took out his sword. Fire then enveloped his sword. Just like how Peruta Circuit manifested whirlwinds, he could turn his mana into flames that burned everything.

“Your Highness... May you rest well.”

The flame he sent flying landed on Shina's split corpse. As her corpse was burning, we silently watched, while Bellode cried.

Once Shina's corpse had burned to ashes, Bellode turned around and respectfully bowed to us... No, he bowed to Ludia.

"I'm glad you're safe, Your Highness. I should have asked for your safety first. I apologize for stepping out of line."

"I forgive you, Bellode... And I'm no longer the Crown Princess. I will throw away my status as royalty."

"Your Highness!"

"Bellode, there's no time... You should abandon the Luka continent."

She was concise.

"There's no hope left here. If you don't want to die with Shina, immediately run away to the dungeon. You're in a guild."

"But, Your Highness...!"

"Bellode, go. Next time you see me, don't call me Your Highness. This continent... is over."

[Party member Palludia Gren Ehuir has been changed to an independent explorer. With her consent, you can Return to Earth with her.]

With trembling eyes, Bellode looked at Ludia, then turned to look at Shina's ashes, which began to scatter into the wind. He bit his lips, turning back around and bowing deeply to Ludia. Then, he disappeared. He had gone to the dungeon. Seeing him disappear, Ludia leaned in my embrace without strength.

"I'm tired... I want to rest."

I could feel the weight of her entire body leaning on me, making me realize to my bones how weak she had gotten.

I couldn't let her leave to the Residential Area like this.

"Ludia, do you want to... come to Earth?"

At my question, Ludia opened her eyes widely in shock. Then, she nodded her head. Her complexion was brighter than before. I was worried that she might not like it, but I felt relieved. Even if she returned to the Residential Area now, it would be bad for her.

However, Luka continent would not let us leave so easily.

[Savior, Hero. For what reason have you arrived at this fallen world?]

I knew instinctively. This showy voice belonged to the Demon Lord. Just by hearing the voice, Ludia shook uncontrollably and clung to me. As I turned around, I also trembled from the presence I could feel with my entire body.

In the sky, there was a bat.

[Do forgive me for being rude and not seeing a guest with my real body. But my real body is currently in deep sleep to accept the world's power.]

“You’re talking about the power you obtained by killing this world’s Hero?”

[That’s right, Hero. Did you enjoy the game? My concubine should have entertained you.]

“It was distasteful. You aren’t very good at greeting your guests, Demon Lord.”

[Huhuhu... You say rather interesting things, other world’s Hero.]

The bat continued.

[Last surviving Princess, come to me. You were the one I wanted from the beginning. If you become mine, everything you ever wanted will be yours.]

“In the name of Mitarus, go kill yourself.”

Ludia spat. Looking at the Demon Lord’s familiar, her eyes were burning with fear and rage. I decided that it would be the best to stop Ludia from seeing the Demon Lord.

[Oh, how unfortunate. But even the Hero holding you so reliably will soon die. In the end, Heroes are only scapegoats. With a few petty blessings, they are forced to fight against us.]

“Return!”

I used Return. Immediately, the surrounding scenery became distorted and melted down.

Before we realized, Ludia and I were in my house on Earth. As Ludia was staring at me blankly, I smile softly and spoke.

“Demon Lord that son of a bitch, do you think we made him mad by leaving in the middle of him talking?”

“... Yeah.”

Still with blank eyes, Ludia nodded. Suddenly, she laughed.

Looking at her, I also bursted out into laughter.

Demon Lord 0, Kang Shin 1. I had gotten my first victory over him.

Author's note:

Shin: Demon Lord, I don't want any information from the likes of you! Stay in Luka continent!

Ludia: Living together... I accepted it without much thinking, but we're living together...!

Shuna, who just woke up from the 2nd floor of Ludia's house: Eh...? Why do I feel like everyone forgot about me...? Ludia, hurry up and come back T.T

If Ludia looked mentally shaken throughout this entire arc, yes, that's what I was going for. She's in a light mental illness. I tried hard to convey it properly; this chapter was even harder than the last. Breaking things is easy, but portraying emotion is really hard... T.T I hope the readers liked it.

Chapter 123. You In The World Of Sunset (1)

After coming to Earth with me, the first situation Ludia had to deal with was meeting my family.

“Oh?”

“... I, I’m back.”

The moment Ludia and I left my room, we ran into mother who was climbing the stairs with a vacuum cleaner. Her eyes became incredibly big the moment she saw us, and she froze. Soon, with a calm expression, she put the vacuum cleaner down, cleaned her hand on her apron, and walked up to me. Putting her hand on my shoulder, she whispered.

“Is that my daughter-in-law?”

“She’s my friend.”

Thankfully, her question was within my expectations so I could give an instant reply. However, Ludia tilted her head and spoke.

“What did she say?”

“Ah.”

Now that I thought about it, Ludia was from Luka continent! She

could talk to me since we were both dungeon explorers, but she couldn't understand mother, who wasn't a dungeon explorer! What happened next surprised me. With her hand not holding onto me, she reached into the air and took something out. That is, she had taken something out from her inventory. It was a black leather choker. She put it on and spoke.

“Hello.”

It was Korean!

“W-What? What did you just equip?”

“It's a translator that the dungeon sells for 300,000 gold. It translates what I say or what others say to languages we can understand. Since people in my continent also speak different languages, I bought one.”

“Why didn't Loretta and Lin tell me about such an item...!?”

I could have easily solved my poor English problem at Britain!

While I was feeling a slight rage at Fairy Garden's guild master and vice-guild master, mother approached Ludia curiously.

“Is she a foreigner?”

“As you can see, yes. Ludia's a foreigner.”

“Where is she from? With her Western appearance, is it America? Britain? France? She doesn’t look Italian...”

“I’m Ehuir Empire’s prin... ordinary citizen.”

If you’re going to throw away your status, [can you talk with honorifics](#)? I gazed at Ludia strongly, but she turned her head the other way with a snort. For the record, she put more strength into holding onto me. Hearing the word ‘Ehuir Empire,’ mother tilted her head.

Kind of hard to convey in English, but you have to use honorifics when talking to older people in Korean, which she didn’t do.

“Ehuir...”

“Mom, she’s a friend I made in the dungeon. I want to let her stay here for a while, is that okay? I’ll tell father and Yua too.”

I changed the subject and asked mother. She immediately stopped thinking about where Ehuir Empire was, as she put her hands on Ludia’s shoulders.

“Of course! You can live here forever! God, I didn’t think my son would bring such a pretty girl home. So? How far have you gone?”

“Mom, she’s really just my friend, so don’t misunderstand...!”

“If you’re going to make excuses that she’s just a friend, at least stop linking your arms together.”

When Ludia heard what mother said, she suddenly became pale, pulling on my arm harder and throwing herself into my embrace. Feeling that something was wrong, mother’s expression became stiff. With a bitter smile, I asked.

“Mom, please?”

“... Alright. Since Shin brought a friend home, I’ll have to show off. I have to appease Yua too.”

“Appease Yua? Is she mad that I wasn’t home for a while?”

“You’ll know once you see her.”

With that, mother smiled. I tilted my head and looked at Ludia, but she still shaking lightly in my embrace.

In any case, Yua really seemed mad, just like mother sad.

“N...No! Y-You can’t live together... oppa! Especially with someone so pretty!’

“She’s just a friend, Yua. There’s a complicated circumstance, so I hope you can understand.”

I looked at mother and father as I tried to convince Yua, but they were both more concerned with Ludia. Mother asked Ludia what her hobbies were and father seemed interested by the fact that Ludia was an explorer. In any case, they were telling me to convince Yua on my own.

“Oppa, to be honest, I’m mad. It hasn’t been long since you came back from Britain, but you left home for four days. You even brought back someone so pretty!”

“Sorry, but there’s a circumstance I can’t tell you about. It’s hard to explain...”

“Why is it hard to explain!?”

As it had been a long time since I saw Yua be so unreasonable, I didn’t know what to do. Then, Ludia sighed and pulled on my sleeve. Holding onto chopsticks strangely, she asked.

“Shin, can you explain how I use this tool?”

“I told you to use a fork instead of chopsticks.”

“I don’t want to. No matter what country you go to, diplomacy starts from your table manners. So you teach me.”

“You didn’t come here as a diplomat...”

“I’m a person of this world now, so it has to be perfect. You have to teach me everything.”

“You...”

“Oppa!”

“Huk!”

While I was paying attention to Ludia, Yua got up from her seat, shaking.

“I’m really angry! Oppa can do whatever you want, I don’t know anymore!”

“Yua!?”

After putting her empty dish in the sink, she left. Y-Yua was finally going through puberty...!

“Shin, can you show me how to use this? I can’t figure out how.”

“I’m surprised you can ignore others so well.”

Even as I sighed, I spent a long time to teach Ludia how to use chopsticks. Since I didn’t know how or why I had to appease Yua, I could only sigh.

When I told Loretta what happened, even she got mad.

“You’re saying a customer named Palludia is staying in Shin-nim’s house? The one you gave the headband to!?”

“Yes.”

“I’m jeal... No, send her back to the Residential Area!”

“You’re saying this too, Loretta? I’m worried about Ludia. I want to watch over her for a while.”

“T-That’s... I know Shin-nim doesn’t have any ulterior motive, but...”

Loretta looked like she wanted to say something, but in the end, she simply sighed. Then, she spoke as if there was no other choice.

“Fine. I’ll allow it.”

“Thanks...?”

Strange. Why did I get Loretta’s approval? What approval did I even get? My head was filled with questions. Meanwhile, Loretta continued.

“Then, I’ll first teach you how to appease your sister.”

“Tell me quickly!”

The questions immediately disappeared.

When I returned from the dungeon, it was midnight. As I only went to the dungeon after Ludia fell asleep and set me free, talking to Loretta for a bit didn’t pass the night.

“Yua, are you sleeping?”

[Yes, I’m sleeping!]

“Can I go in?”

[... Yes.]

After shouting angrily that she was sleeping, she easily crumbled at my request. I entered the door with a grin. Yua seemed to have been studying, as she was looking at her notebook and using the internet. She turned her rotating chair around and faced me. Her cheeks were puffed up.

“I thought you were with Palludia-ssi.”

“She went to sleep a while ago. Oppa just came back from the

dungeon.”

“Uuuu, so she was clinging so closely to oppa before going to bed?”

“Yua, you also realized that something was wrong, right?”

When I asked her calmly, Yua made a difficult expression... then nodded her head.

“How did you meet her?”

“I met her in the dungeon, and we became friends. You see, I went to help Ludia this time.”

“She’s really just a friend? You guys aren’t dating?”

“Of course not.”

“Then why is she sticking to oppa so closely?”

“It’s hard to explain in detail, just that she went through some difficulties. She lost her place in her country too. I couldn’t leave her alone, so I brought her here.”

“The details are what I want to hear...”

Yua murmured weakly and drooped her shoulders. Then, she said something I never would have imagined.

“I want to help oppa too.”

“Eh...?”

“Oppa looks like you’re having a hard time lately. Plus, you’re always busy. The incident that made oppa’s friend like that... oppa must have been there too. So I’m worried about oppa.”

“Um.”

While I was panicking as Yua’s response was different than what Loretta said, Yua continued with her head down.

“When oppa first became a dungeon explorer, I was happy. You were always smiling, full of confidence, and even lost muscles and became handsome... Ah, oppa was always handsome, but oppa became even more handsome.”

“T-Thanks.”

“But after the second moon rose and monsters began to appear... Oppa began to change. I was happy that I could be proud of oppa, but lately, I’ve been restless. I’m worried that oppa might suddenly leave me and disappear.”

A day would come where people without abilities would have trouble being near the Hero. It was when I would have to leave my family. Because Yua's words were so accurate, I couldn't argue against her.

Then, Yua looked up, staring at my eyes.

"If I become a dungeon explorer... can I help oppa, too?"

"No."

Although I was surprised from Yua's words, I could answer her question immediately.

"Yua doesn't have to fight. Fighting can be done by people like father and oppa, who only knows how to fight. Yua can help oppa by staying safe and being healthy."

"I know how to fight too!"

"No, Yua. You're more suited to things other than fighting."

Yua didn't have talent for physical activities like fighting. I was certain. Since I couldn't tell her that outright, I tried to say it in a roundabout way, but it didn't seem to work, as Yua's eyes became sharp.

"I hate oppa."

“Huk!”

“Oppa sucks! Leave!”

Yua talked to me without honorifics! When Yua pushed me with her hands, I became worried that my tough body would hurt her and quickly left her room. Immediately afterwards, the door closed with a boom. Left alone outside the room, I found a word to objectively describe this situation, and murmured as my heart crumbled.

“Sibling quarrel...!”

Loretta, this is all your fault! Even though I didn’t get to say what you taught me or use the present you gave me!

I found a target to lash out on. It was the Wendigo. However, the Wendigo had a critical weakness to serve as my stress reliever.

[Choose your reward.]

[1. Wendigo’s Fur Pants

2. Frozen Crystal]

“Damn, this guy is too weak!”

He’s so weak, I don’t even feel like fighting him! I kicked the snow on the ground in anger, and swallowed the Frozen Crystal.

[By consuming the Frozen Crystal, your resistance and affinity to freezing energy increases. Your magic increases by 1.]

[I love Shin! It became colder!]

“I think my affinity with Ruyue is already at its peak, but... Ruyue, I like Ruyue too.”

[Ehehe...]

Ruyue rubbed her head in my chest, and I patted her while thinking about what to do next. First, I had to appease Yua... No, that’s probably not possible right now. Since Yua rarely got mad, I didn’t even know when she would calm down. I had an idea why she got mad, but it wasn’t possible for me to do anything about it...

“I guess it’s the Wyvern’s Nest.”

America, Arizona State, Page’s Antelope Canyon. Its Field Dungeon, Wyvern’s Nest. If I went there, I could meet Ciara Kenex, the woman who addressed me as Hero. I would know once I met her. Why she called me Hero and who she was. If she refused

to speak, I would have to squeeze the info out of her. I was more than capable now.

Alright, I decided. Once I finished grinding Wendigo and Ruyue's ability grew, I would go to Wyvern's Nest. Wash your neck and wait, Ciara Kenex!

Author's note:

It's the start of a new arc. I lightly portrayed Ludia assimilating to Earth's culture. It's now time for dungeon, dungeon, dungeon! Then, we'll focus on Ciara Kenex, that suspicious woman!

For the record, if you don't read this chapter carefully, you'll regret it later. Why? That's a secret ★

Chapter 124. You In The World Of Sunset (2)

Hunting the Wendigo by myself was extremely easy, but I could still get Frozen Crystals even if I added a few more people to my party. As such, I decided to hunt the Wendigo in parties. When the explorers stuck on 50th floor saw me, they immediately recognized me as Crown Prince.

“Crown Prince is already on the 50th floor.”

“A miracle. 50th floor already...”

“But even Crown Prince should have hard time breaking through the 50th floor. He’ll be stuck here too.”

“If you’re done talking nonsense, we’re going in.”

In the fight against Wendigo, everyone else had only one job to do. It was to stay as far away from Wendigo as possible. I didn’t know because Ruyue’s power was protecting me, but the freezing energy that the Wendigo emitted was no joke. Even if priests casted protection magic with all their strength, veteran warriors, who had climbed all the way to the 50th floor, still had difficulties.

[Guaaaaaaa!]

[Shin, that’s a cold attack!]

“Yeah, yeah.”

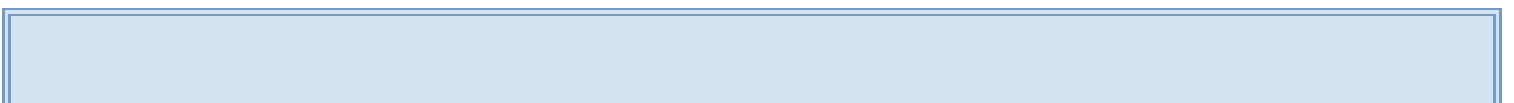
Of course, the 50th Floor Master Wendigo also had a special attack skill. With its hand dyed white, it drew a large trace. If one even glazed it, he would be frozen for a moment regardless of his resistance. I did not experience it in my first raid, so I ended up being caught by surprise in my second raid. Thankfully, Ruyue protected me with a barrier while I was frozen.

Moreover, because of my high resistance, I became unfrozen in 5 seconds. It seemed the Wendigo could not use it consecutively. With a bewildered face, it tried to kick me, which simply led me to beating it up. In truth, this was the first time I wasn't looking forward to the Floor Master skill.

However, there were three slots left in the pocket watch to store skills in. Since I felt that the subclass would transform once the skills were filled, I planned to take whatever skills I could get. If getting to the 60th floor would take longer than I expected, I considered putting Crimson Scale Armor's Crimson Roar into the pocket watch too.

“Haat.”

When the Wendigo tried to swipe at me with its whitened arm, I created a plate of ice in the air with Ruyue's power and leapt up. As the Wendigo looked up in vain, I grinned and shouted, “Thunder Spear!”



[Choose your reward.]

[1. Wendigo's Fur Coat

2. High-grade Health Potion

3. Frozen Crystal

4. Frozen Dart]

Eh? Didn't I come in with 6 people? When I turned around while swallowing the Frozen Crystal, I saw three explorers hugging each other while shaking.

"C-C-Crown Prince, h-h-h-how are you completely fine?"

"H-H-H-H-He said h-he had an ele-elemental."

"I-It's s-so cold! I-I'm going t-to die!"

"... The other two?"

"F-Froze to d-death."

"...."

My Wendigo party raids generally ended like this. In truth, I wanted to screw grinding and just get it over with.

Ludia was completely fine when she was next to me. But when I tried to separate from her, she showed signs of mental instability. Thinking that she had gone back to her normal self was only my wishful thinking.

Whether we were eating, reading books, listening to music, knitting, drinking tea, or whatnot, the moment I tried to go out of her sight, she tried to scream in protest. Of course, I considered it my punishment for killing her sister and accepted it. I was just glad that I could serve as her emotional pillar.

However, I couldn't let it stay like this. Right now, it was fine since I had a lot of free time with only hunting the Wendigo three times a day. But once I finished grinding, I planned to go to America. I couldn't bring Ludia along.

When I told her, her reaction was extremely concerning.

“Y-You’re abandoning me?”

“No, I’m coming back.”

“Liar.”

“Are you the only one living here? My parents and Yua are here too.”

“Liar, liar. When I wake up one day, everything will be gone. I’ll be the only one left in this world.”

“Ludia.”

“Ah, it’s that. You’re going to leave me and go fight someone again. the D-Demon Lord chased after us.”

“No, that’s not it.”

“T-Take me with you. Take me with you, please. I don’t want to be left by myself like a fool again.”

She didn’t look like she’d listen no matter what I said, so I shut my mouth and held Ludia’s hands. Ludia took the opportunity to throw herself into my embrace and didn’t let go. When I raised my head, not knowing what to do, mother opened the door in the perfect time with a plate full of fruits. Then, she smiled kindly and closed the door. Damn it, I didn’t like that needlessly kind consideration!

“Don’t go. If you’re going, take me with you. Please?”

“It’s dangerous if you come.”

“Shin, take me with you. Let me go too.”

She really didn't listen! It seemed she wouldn't let go until I agreed to take her. In the end, I sighed and replied.

“There are two conditions.”

“Un.”

“First, you have to hide your identity. This is easy since you can buy an item called Otus' Secret from the Floor Shop.”

“Un.”

“Second, you have to get stronger. I can't take you if you don't break through the 40th floor at least.”

“... 40th floor?”

Ludia's eyes trembled slightly.

“I'm only in the entrance of the 36th floor.”

“There are still 3 weeks until I finish grinding the 50th floor. I'm sure you can do it.”

“T-Then I'd have to be away from you.”

“Right, since I can’t go back to the 36th floor.”

“I, I can’t. No. I don’t want to.”

“Then I’m going to leave you behind.”

“Ah, aah.”

Ludia looked at me like the world just crumbled down. The next moment, she suddenly looked brighter as she spoke.

“I don’t have anyone to party with me now. Shuna still can’t take a foot out of the Residential Area.”

I had forgotten about Shuna until now,. Ludia had known about Shuna, but didn’t go back to the dungeon even once, and was only now using her as an excuse. I thought for a moment which of us were worse, but I didn’t say anything, concluding that we were both bad.

“But Ellos’ party is waiting for you.”

“K-Kasina is...?”

Ludia retorted as if she’d never imagined it. ‘So she’s not that close to Ellos...’ Thinking to myself, I nodded. Ellos had actually messaged me recently.

“Yeah. He’s waiting for your return on the 36th floor.”

“N-No. I can’t anymore. I lost my confidence.”

“But if you can’t clear the 40th floor, I won’t take you with me. I’m not lying.”

“N-No... R-Right, I can’t go back to them alone.”

“Miss Shuna will be there too.”

“Shuna can’t climb the dungeon anymore.”

Shuna had no house nor guild. It was unlikely that other guilds would take her in. That’s what Ludia said.

Since it came to this, I decided to tell Ludia the truth.

“Ludia, you see...”

Looking around my Special Mansion, Ludia made a blank expression. She saw more than one hundred rooms, swimming pool and grand bath, basement training room and personal training room, grand dining hall and basement storage room, and finally the Giant Iron Boar ruining the garden’s look. Speaking of the Giant Iron Boar, it was now reduced to 20 meters from 60 meters in size. Ludia shouted.

“I’m going to live here with you!”

“I’m going to found a guild.”

“...”

Ludia made an expression like she just stepped on dung, and spoke.

“Can’t we just make it our home?”

“No, we can’t. Weren’t you Miss Shuna’s best friend? What about Miss Shuna?”

“I’ll give my house to Shuna. It’s easy to transfer ownership. That way, Shuna can become an independent explorer too!”

“What about you?”

“W-Well, I’m... of course...”

Ludia’s faced turned red, as she looked down and pulled on my sleeve. I lightly pulled my sleeve back and spoke.

“See, out of words, right? I’m going to make a guild.”

“... I hate you. I hate you so much.”

“Yeah, you can hate me as much as you want. Though, I won’t hate you.”

“You big insensitive idiot! I really want to kill you...!”

“Yeah, yeah.”

Making a guild was easier than I thought. I just had to visit the Residential Area’s administrator and submit the necessary documents. But when I went to see Meladel, he opened his mouth after seeing Ludia linking her arms with me.

“Y-You. Who is that lady?”

“A friend.”

“Oh, dear lord. Is this the fate of a Hero...? My poor Master...!”

“Stop speaking nonsense and take my guild creation application.”

As Meladel accepted my application, he continued to say incomprehensible things like, ‘Do you like boats?’ or ‘I suggest you wear an abdominal belt.’ Then, messages popped up in front of my eyes.

[You created a guild! You became the guild master of the F rank guild, 'Revival'!]

[Guild member: Kang Shin (Guild Master, Gold), Palludia Gren Ehuir (Guild Member, Silver). Total: 2]

[You can raise the guild rank by increasing the number of guild members or by making achievements by clearing Event Dungeons or Event Raids. With higher guild rank, your guild will become more well-known in the dungeon, giving you better rewards in Event Raids and giving you more freedom in the dungeon.]

It wasn't much. It didn't increase my strength. As I didn't expect anything, I didn't feel disappointed either.

"You can request a guild emblem when you become D rank. People from famous guilds usually wear brooches or capes engraved with their guild emblem to show their status."

"Like a uniform?"

"More like empty show."

Even while I was talking with Meladel, Ludia stayed still. She must have heard the messages too. Then, she murmured silently.

“Revival...”

“Um... It’s a word from Earth’s language called English. It means resurrection, recovery, or resurgence. I wanted to use the Korean word for it, but it said there’s already a guild by that name.”

“[BhuWhal](#). It means ‘toy’ in Syrnor continent’s language.”

부활 (Bhu Whal) = Revival in Korean

“Why would they make a guild with that meaning!? Are the guild members the guild master’s toy? Ek.”

Suddenly, I felt weight on my back. I turned around and saw Ludia who had her face buried in my back. I couldn’t see her face. Flustered, I talked to her.

“L-Ludia?”

“ ... ”

“Ludia... Ludia?”

“... I’ll try.”

Ludia said in a small voice.

“You...”

“I’ll try... climbing the dungeon. I’ll contact Shuna... and Kasina too. I’ll try.”

I didn’t know why she was suddenly so willing. Perhaps, she felt a sense of security at the fact that she belonged to a guild with me. Perhaps, she had been strengthening her determination this entire time. Perhaps...

I could think of many possibilities, but I didn’t ask her. It was fine the way it was now.

“Yeah. Thanks for taking a step forward, Ludia.”

“Un... Un.”

*

I had a dream.

The sky burned and dark smoke shot up.

Morning didn’t wake and night didn’t sleep.

Fairies that remained in fantasies were chased out to reality. Holding their torn wings, they cursed humans.

“XXX, I always think why I always go through such hardships when I involve myself with you.”

“X, that’s wrong. Those that can say they went through hardships after involving themselves with X are those that survive. It’s usually hard to survive after involving oneself with X.”

Under a bloodstained sunset, a giant and a handsome young man were exchanging jokes. One held an enormous claymore and the other held a longsword, which were both suitably big for their masters size.

“You’re all noisy. Go out and kill the monsters. Be careful so blood doesn’t splatter onto me. Also, if you curse X, I’ll kill you.”

“Witch, shut up and prepare your flames. Because of your laid-back attitude, I thought I’d see the afterlife today.”

“Guys2, I just thought up an extremely funny joke. Don’t fight and calm down! Lizard King is the king of the lizardmen, right? But if you look, there are 5 Lizard Kings running at us! What do you think this is? The small kingdoms have joined!”

A red witch, black assassin, cheerful gunner, and several others. Although there weren’t many, each of them were incredibly strong allies.

“Xa, are you ready?”

“XX, your armor is really cool!”

“Haha, it really is. At least it’ll garner full attention. I praise thy courage.”

Someone wearing an armor radiating five-colored brilliance stepped forward, setting them all side. Even though it was my first time seeing him, my heart dropped a beat. I had the same reaction every time. From the first time I saw him to even now.

“I have the strongest body here anyways. Really, there are probably no other guilds where the guild master is treated like a punching bag. Alright... Revival, we’re going.”

“X!”

“Ah, right. XXX... Can I leave it to you?”

Standing tall in a world of sunset alone, he turned and smiled at me. I held myself back from mixing up business and private affairs, and shouted confidently, ‘Of course!’ Along with a prayer in my heart, hoping to be of help to the one I love.

“O Power, O Blessing vested in the Earth! We will fight to protect thee, let us borrow thy power! O Mitarus, bless and sublimate this power!”

Author’s note:

Just because I kept the narration in first person POV, it doesn't mean it will always be that way!

Also, I already warned that you'd regret it if you read the last chapter half-heartedly!

Translator's note:

It's hard to show it in English, but each of the Xs is one syllable. Xa = Yua (I think); just mentioning that one because X is English, making Xa look weird...

You guys can do the detective work for the other ones if you'd like 😊

There are enough clues to figure out all the names and whose POV the dream was in.

Chapter 125. You In The World Of Sunset (3)

The next morning, I woke up in the temporary bed I installed next to my bed. Because Ludia wanted to be with me even while sleeping, I had no choice but to install this temporary bed. Plus, because I only needed to sleep two to three hours, I gave Ludia my bed and slept in the temporary bed.

In any case, because I wanted to sleep for a while longer, I closed my eyes again, but soon reopened my eyes from the slight tingle I felt in my hand. At the same time, I realized what had woke me up. I was holding hands with Ludia, who had stretched her hand out of the bed.

“Ludia, you’re up?”

“... Un.”

“Okay, you can change first. I’ll turn around and... Hm?”

Ludia peeked her head out of the blanket. When her eyes met mine, her face suddenly reddened as she went back into the blanket. Even so, she didn’t let go of my hand. What was happening?

“What’s wrong, Ludia?”

“Noth.... Nothing...!”

“Tell me. I’m worried. Come on.”

“It’s nothing... I only just realized that I was the worst piece of human trash...!”

What the hell happened last night!?

“That’s not ‘nothing’!”

“L-Leave. I can’t think straight if I’m with you right now.”

“Okay, I’ll leave... but you have to let go of me.”

I took my hand out forcefully from Ludia’s grasp. This girl, when did she get so strong?

But after grasping empty air, Ludia’s hand once again took hold of mine. Instead of letting go, she even pulled strongly, and I almost fell into the blanket with her. I held on since I was stronger than a priestess, but I pulled the blanket down and looked at Ludia’s reddened face.

“Hey!”

“Sorry, stay with me. I’m sorry. Please stay.”

“... Okay.”

In the end, I had to stay within an arm's reach of Ludia. With my head turned the other direction, Ludia changed. I thought I'd die from embarrassment.

Ludia was wearing a white dress. Although the ribbon decoration or the dress' material changed from time to time, she always wore white dresses when she was in my house. Drawing my attention with her white and smooth legs showing under her dress, she casually said something completely shocking.

“I think I just awakened.”

“What!?”

Was awakening something that only happened to people from Earth!? People from other worlds could do it too!? While I was staring at her blankly in shock, Ludia stared at me with a pleased smile.

“How ugly.”

“It's none of your business.”

“Huhu, you're really ugly... Come closer.”

“How ugly I am doesn't matter. What matters is your abili...”

“O Earth.”

I stayed still, but the floor wriggled and I was moved in front of her. I was shocked once again. What ‘Earth’? This was the 2nd floor! Shocking things were happening ever since I woke up.

Ludia reached out and caressed my face. With her hand feeling my defenseless face, I felt quite strange. I tried my best to not bite her fingers and opened my mouth.

“Ludia, is that your awakened ability?”

“Un. I can control the earth and utilize its power. It’s an ability based on animism. Perhaps it’s better to say it’s based on belief of nature.”

She wasn’t lying. Even though I wasn’t on guard, I didn’t notice her moving me at all. Perhaps, her awakened ability was stronger than her healing ability as a priestess.

“Un. If I had this power when I was in Luka continent... No, there’s no use in thinking that.”

“Yeah, I didn’t think you’d awaken an ability in Earth either. By the way, are you going to continue touching me?”

“In my dream... I met many people I didn’t know.”

“When are you going to stop tou... Dream?”

“Un.”

Ludia easily ignored my question and said in a slightly sleepy voice. Dream? Ah, the premonition dream. The dream that acted as the trigger to awakening abilities and showing one's future possibilities... Of course, with what happened in Luka continent, I confirmed that it wasn't absolute, but it was true that something similar would happen. I became curious as to what dream she had.

“Was I in that dream too?”

“Un, you were. That's why it's hard to control myself.”

“What does me being in your dream and you controlling yourself have to... Wait, you said control?”

“Un. Can you... bend down a bit more?”

“Ludia, your breathing is a bit rough. Are you sick?”

Feeling a sense of unease, I put my hand up to take Ludia's hand off. At that moment, the door opened. Mother, who was standing there, spoke with a bright smile.

“Son, it's great to be so healthy early in the morning, but can you wait until the night for reproductive acts?”

“What!? What reproductive act!?”

“New daughter, I’ll actively create the right mood at night, so do your best then. Alright, come down and eat breakfast.”

“... Yes, mother.”

“New daughter!? Why is Mom calling Ludia ‘new daughter’? Ludia, do you even know what that means? Hm?”

I, Kang Shin, a man among men, almost became a married man at the age of 21.

“Then, see you later.”

“Crown Prince-nim, see you later!”

“Yeah, Ludia. Miss Shuna too, see you both later... I said, see you later.”

“But...”

In Marianne’s Garden, which had become a guild house, I saw Ludia and Shuna off. Ludia found it hard to separate from me, as she would come clinging after taking a few steps away from me and being startled. After she repeated it a few times, I couldn’t just let it continue. I took Ludia off and gave her to Shuna.

“Miss Shuna, take care of her.”

“Y-Yes! Crown Prince-nim, by the way... Are you dating Ludia...?”

“No, we’re just friends... Ow!”

“Die!”

Surprisingly, Ludia succeeded in getting away from me! Unfortunately, I didn’t know exactly why she succeeded.

Shuna put on a bitter smile while watching us, but clenched her fists and spoke happily.

“So I still have a chance...”

“Shuna, let’s go... forever.”

“Kyak! L-Ludia! No, sorry, I’m sorry!”

Watching them talking loudly, I saw them off to the dungeon. It looked like Ludia was beating Shuna, but trusting that it was simply an expression of affection, I also headed to the dungeon.

Time passed slowly when you were bored. After sending Ludia

off to the dungeon, all I had to do was to hunt Wendigo three times and train my techniques. Although I knew how important it was, with how boring and unthrilling it was, I felt like I was forcing myself to do so.

If there was one positive side, it was that I was confident that I had caught up to the Spear Technique and Peruta Circuit that I had forcefully leveled up. I considered using skill points to level them up again, but since I couldn't be sure that I could always get more skill points, I decided to save them for when the two skills were higher leveled.

[Climbing the dungeon alone is getting boring.]

“Oh? That's unexpected. I didn't think that you'd like being in a party so much.”

Running across Wendigo's arm, I replied to the message I received.

[I want to quickly party with Shin. Plus, you don't come to school nowadays.]

“Sorry, but I prioritize solo play.”

The reason I didn't go to school nowadays was because it was hard to separate from Ludia.

[I know it's because you're embarrassed.]

“No, it isn’t...”

Replying sincerely, I stabbed Wendigo’s eye and released a lightning attack. I leapt up, avoiding the screaming Wendigo’s hand.

“What floor are you on now?”

[40th floor. The reaper killed me twice.]

“Well, I didn’t think you’d pass that easily.”

[Ugh, the first time, it suddenly appeared behind my back and killed me. The second time, I was doing my best to memorize its movement patterns, but it suddenly shot a scythe from its stomach and killed me. When Master finds out I died, I’ll get scolded...]

“Didn’t I tell you how the strategy for defeating the reaper?”

[I’m not a monster like Shin!]

It seems the 40th Floor Master couldn’t be defeated easily with just her natural talent and magic. It made sense as the Grim Reaper was one of the strongest bosses. Once she defeated him, she should have no problem until the 50th floor. Plus, she could get even stronger from the 50th floor.

... Of course, that was given that Ye-Eun could somehow deal with the freezing energy. While pondering about it, I dodged Wendigo's whitened hands and landed on his head.

“Some of my friends are about to reach the 40th floor. Why don't you try hunting the reaper with them?”

[Friends? Sure! Shin's friends must all be nice, right?]

“Mm, well, yeah.”

It was good timing. Even though Ludia got stronger with her newly awakened ability, adding a powerful damage dealer like Ye-Eun to her party would be like adding flowers to embroidery.

[Hehe, I want to meet them soon. D-Don't worry! I just mean I'm looking forward to seeing them as comrades. I don't mean I'm looking forward to meeting other men!]

“One of them is the older sister of your old party leader. She's called Palludia. If possible, try not to bring up her younger sister.”

[... A girl?]

“Well, yeah, that's what sister means.”

I delivered a Heroic Strike to Wendigo's forehead. Ignoring the Wendigo trying to shake me off, I used White Lightning

Consecutive Strike.

[A friend... but a girl? A girlfriend?]

“She’s just a friend. Like you and me.”

[I hate you, Shin.]

“In any case, treat her well, okay? She lost her younger sister not too long ago...”

[Yeah, okay.]

After talking with Ye-Eun, I finished up my fight with Wendigo. Lost her younger sister, huh... Coming from the one who killed her, I felt nauseous. Even though Shina tried to kill me first, even though she betrayed her world to join the Demon Lord, she was once my friend and was Ludia’s younger sister. It didn’t change the fact that I killed her.

[Choose your reward.]

[1. Wendigo’s Fur Boots

2. Frozen Crystal]

“Damn it, I need to let it go too... crunch.”

[You consumed Frozen Crystal to its limit, greatly increasing your resistance and affinity to freezing energy! Your magic increases by 6! Consuming more of this item will likely have no effect.]

“... Eh?”

I suddenly realized that a month had passed since I started grinding the Wendigo!

Chapter 126. You In The World Of Sunset (4)

[You equipped the Wendigo Set. Your magic and dexterity increase by 25. When the Wendigo Set is equipped, you can use 'Ice Touch' once per day.]

[With Ice Touch, you can gather extreme freezing energy on your hands. When you attack your enemies, it ignores the enemies' resistance and freezes them, but they can break out after 5 seconds depending on their resistance.]

“Mm, I see.”

I nodded my head imposingly as a response to message noona, then took off the fur coat as it was irritatingly hot. Then, as I stored Ice touch on the 10 o'clock position, I pondered, 'How was I supposed to use this skill? ... Wait.'

“If I use Divine Speed and beat up the enemy for 3 seconds, then use Ice Touch before Divine Speed ends, I can beat up the enemy for 5 more seconds!”

Together, I would have 8 seconds to beat the enemy up freely! Plus, I didn't need to use this freezing energy in close-range only. There must be a way to use it somehow with Ruyue. After all, all Floor Masters' skills were useful.

“Alright... It's time to contact her.”

I took out the letter I always carried with me. Ciara Kenex. I didn't know what she wanted from me, even after reading the letter thrice. It would be faster to ask her in person. After making my decision, I put it to action. Once I set my mind to do something, I wouldn't hesitate. That was my personal philosophy.

The next day, I gathered my family, including Yua who still wouldn't talk to me, and told them I had to go to America. Yua's expression was quite a sight.

“Again!?”

“You're really busy lately, son. You're going to lose weight.”

“I'm fine. I did get slimmer, but I got a lot stronger as well.”

“Hm, America... Are you going to that canyon where wyverns appear?”

“Father, do you want to come with me?”

Father surprisingly thought about it seriously, then shook his head.

“No. I would have gone if it was any other time, but I'm almost about to make a breakthrough in my spearmanship... I heard that wyverns are strong. Be careful and don't get hurt.”

“Ludia has a healing ability. Since we’ll be together, there’s no need to worry.”

“Palludia-ssi is going too!?”

Yua’s anger seemed to have soared to the heavens. She then shouted, “I’m going to start going to church!”

“Yua!?”

“I want to be a priestess too!”

‘Yua, even if you become a nun, I don’t think you can become a priestess that uses holy magic.’ Thinking that in my head, I placed my hand on Yua’s head. She tried to take my hand off in anger, but before she could do so, I said, “Thanks for worrying about me, Yua.”

“Uk!”

“If Yua becomes an Awakened, then oppa won’t leave Yua alone at home.”

“What about being a dungeon explorer?”

“You can’t climb the dungeon without a combat ability. If Yua becomes an Awakened, we can talk then.”

“Uuu...”

Yua seemed to have acquiesced, as she nodded with a frown.
Thank god!

“Good. Oppa will bring back presents from America for Yua, okay?”

“I’m not a child, don’t try to appease me with presents. I hate oppa.”

“Kuk.”

It seemed I needed more time before Yua’s anger could be appeased.

[I’m going too.]

“... Hwaya?”

[You came to help me before, so I’ll go with you to Arizona.]

When I told Hwaya I’d be in America for a while, she said she would come with me, making me flustered. As her reason made sense, I was even more flustered.

“No, that’s different than this. I know I’m going to an S rank Field Dungeon, but it’s not like I’ll be in a dangerous situation. You don’t need to trouble yourself.”

[But wouldn’t it be easier if I was there?]

“That’s true, but... You’re Britain’s ability user. If you come, they might take it as Britain’s assistance.”

[No, I’ll make it clear that I’m participating as Thunder Knight’s friend.]

“You mean you’re not going to make it a trade between America and Britain?”

[Yeah. Britain won’t understand my worth unless I show them.]

Coming from someone as patriotic as Hwaya, it was a surprise. Brightman really must have made her angry. I continued, still half-surprised from what she said.

“To be honest, you’ll be in my way.”

[That’s too honest! I’ve gotten stronger too! Plus, I got a Legend-grade defensive equipment, so I’ve perfectly covered my weakness. Don’t be surprised when you see me! I’ll prepare a plane for us in two days, so be ready!]

With that, Hwaya hung up. ‘At least she was eager to go...’ With that, I sighed. I had no choice but to acknowledge that she was coming.

Thankfully, Ye-Eun safely defeated the Grim Reaper with Ludia and Ellos’ party. Since Ludia has broke through to the 41st floor and even awakened an ability, I decided to take her with me to America like I promised.

The day of promise then came.

“Shin, hi!”

“... Eh?”

There was one uninvited guest waiting for me in front of my house.

I turned around to Ludia and demanded an explanation. Ludia buried her face in my back and dodged my eyes as she replied.

“S-She said she would come. I couldn’t do anything about it. I didn’t want to tell her either.”

“Shin, you’re so mean. You should have called me if you were going somewhere so dangerous!”

“But you’re weaker than me.”

“I got stronger by climbing the dungeon, so I wanted to try hunting wyverns too! By the way Palludia, can you get off of Shin now? I heard that the two of you are just friends!”

“Hmph.”

Ludia returned Ye-Eun’s burning gaze with her special cold gaze. At the same time, I sent Ye-Eun a message only she could hear.

[I told you, Ludia has a special circumstance.]

[But it’s annoying watching her like that in front of me!]

[Do you want to go home?]

“... Tsk.”

Ye-Eun finally seemed to have understood. I felt sorry in a way, so I decided to get her a gift to make up for it. With that, I headed to the airport with both Ludia and Ye-Eun. I had already turned down Ciara Kenex’s offer to prepare a method of transportation. Hwaya and I promised to meet here, and her private plane would be waiting here. As expected, when I arrived at the airport, Hwaya was already waiting at the airport. It was obvious she had used some kind of magic to prevent herself from being noticed by people other than me.

“It’s been a while, Shin... Oh?”

“Yeah, it really has, Hwaya. Sorry, I forgot to tell you about my friends. They’re both ability users and dungeon explorers.”

The moment Hwaya saw Ludia and Ye-Eun, she opened her eyes widely in surprise. However, it was Ludia and Ye-Eun who were more surprised, as they noticed Hwaya only after I spoke with her. The two of them rudely pointed their fingers at Hwaya and shouted.

“T-That’s Ye Hwaya, right? Ye Hwaya!”

“I saw her on TV!”

“That’s my Korean name. Even though I’m staying in Korea for now, I’m British. Hwaya Mastiford. I’m a Second Dungeon explorer and a friend of Shin.”

Hwaya seemed to be accustomed to such reactions, as she introduced herself with a sigh. Ludia and Ye-Eun’s response differed.

“Shin, you, when did you become friends with someone like her...? Uk, no, I’m lacking in all aspects...!”

“Palludia. I have a family name, but I’m not using it right now. Shin is... my friend. For now.”

At Hwaya's introduction, Ye-Eun wrapped her head with her hands and crouched down in agony, while Ludia made a light smile and puffed out her nonexistent chest to introduce herself. Eh? Ludia, she... Eh? When did she... Eh!?

"I see. Friend 'for now'... Hm, okay. Nice to meet you."

Hwaya smiled lightly at Ludia and knocked on the airstairs next to her plane.

"Shin, no one else is coming, right?"

"Uh, yeah."

"Then, let's go. The skunk plane is going to depart soon. We can continue talking once we take off. We'll have to fly for at least 7 hours anyways."

While I was bewildered from Ludia's inexplicable change, Hwaya urged us to get on board. Ye-Eun also looked slightly out of touch with reality as she staggered up the stairs.

"I, I'm on Ye Hwaya's personal plane..."

"Shin, let's go."

Ludia linked her arms with mine and pulled me along. Now that I

realized the change in Ludia, I shivered at the sensation I could feel with my arm. Dear god, there was no way this was artificial... It had to be natural! When I walked up the stairs as shocked as Ye-Eun and entered the plane, Hwaya, who walked by me, asked me in a whisper.

“So, there should only be six explorers on Earth. How do you explain bringing two explorers?”

“I can explain later.”

“Yeah, I’ll be sure to hear it when we’re alone, so prepare yourself.”

“Shin!”

When I was standing still listening to Hwaya, Ludia called my name and pulled on my arm. I made a bitter smile, and Hwaya laughed with her eyes narrowed.

“Shin won’t run away. You don’t have to shout his name. Don’t be so nervous.”

“...!”

Hwaya and Ludia exchanged glances for a short moment. Was it a power struggle? Could this be the women’s fight, which I only ever heard about? One that determines who’s superior in their first meeting? Now that I thought about it, neither Ludia or Hwaya

should have lost to anyone in appearance. Hwaya was famous on Earth for her beauty, and Ludia was regarded as one of the top beauties in the dungeon.

It was almost impossible to objectively judge a person's appearance, but it would be hard for me to find anyone more beautiful than Hwaya and Ludia purely in appearance. Since the two of them met, it was probably normal for them to have their own thoughts about the matter.

I flinched seeing them exchange glances, but I soon urged Ludia to keep going.

“Ludia, let's sit.”

“Un, wait... Mastiford. I don't like you.”

“I feel the same way, Palludia.”

They both smiled. It was the kind of smile that emanated chills. Because their smiles were almost exactly the same, I almost got goosebumps. However, this atmosphere, which was as if Wendigo had used Ice Touch, was soon melted by a voice.

“Shin, there's a drinking bar here! Do you think there are fries too!?”

‘Ye-Eun, I really like your never changing self...’ With a sigh, I replied.

“You know, you didn’t even introduce yourself to Hwaya yet.”

“Ah, right. I’m Su Ye-Eun. Nice to meet you.”

“Huhu, nice to meet you too. I think I can get along with you.”

“I-It’s an honor! Uu, but I feel conflicted...”

Just like that, the four of us set off to Arizona. Ciara Kenex would be waiting for me at Antelope Canyon. Would she know that I’d bring them along? Perhaps, she might with her special ability. With a grin, I leaned my head against the seat.

Would I be at Arizona once I woke up? How did Ciara Kenex know I was the Hero? Does she know more about Heroes than me?

Perhaps, she knew why and how I became the Hero.

Thinking about questions that I had no way of answering for now, I slowly closed my eyes.

I heard the rumble of the skunk plane taking off.

Chapter 127. Team Revival (1)

My first impression of Antelope Canyon was as such.

“Isn’t this the Grand Canyon?”

“Shin, think about Windermere Lake. They say higher ranked dungeons go through greater terraforming.”

“It’s majestic...”

“Hm? Aren’t all canyons this big?”

The Antelope Canyon was known for its narrow passageways, formed by the erosion of sandstone, and the beam of light that shined down from above.

However, the current Antelope Canyon was wide enough to play a game of soccer, and its beautiful passageway had taken a strange formation. It wouldn’t be weird if a golem popped out of it. Furthermore, it was incredibly large. I couldn’t tell where the canyon ended. Though, perhaps the fact that it was currently night had something to do with it.

“Oh, who are they?”

“Hwaya Mastifor and Thunder Knight. They’re famous. They’re the ones who cleared Britain’s Field Dungeon.”

“Not even America can ignore them. I didn’t think they’d come here though.”

A few ability users were grouped in front of a car at the entrance of the canyon. I could clearly hear their whispers. It was the power of 300,000 gold.

“There are two more girls though. They’re both wearing masks.”

“Thunder Knight’s wearing a mask too. They’re probably his friends.”

“He’s not alone? I’m getting more curious as to who he is.”

“They could be Flame Witch’s subordinate. There is a rumor that Thunder Knight only appeared at Windermere because he was the Flame Witch’s subordinate.”

“Shin, I’ll go burn those idiots.”

“Just let them talk. We don’t need to care about weaklings like them.”

Unhappy with the ability users whispering to themselves, Hwaya created flames on her palm, but I calmed her down. I was looking for something else. A few months had passed since the Field Dungeon had been created. Just like at Graveyard Over the Lake,

there were several buildings above the canyon, ruining its natural scenery. I suspected that the person waiting for me was in one of those buildings.

As expected, not long after we arrived, a voice rang out in my head.

[You came. I'm happy. If it's okay, can we meet right away?]

It was the voice of a young and frail girl. I remembered from her letter that she could use telepathy. However, I didn't know how to respond to her.

[If it's okay, nod your head once.]

I nodded my head. She answered immediately.

[Come inside your lodging. Room 1301, I'll be waiting there.]

With that, the telepathy cut off. I led my companions looking at me curiously to the lodging, while I gave them an explanation.

"I've been contacted by a telepathy. You guys didn't hear anything?"

"No, not at all."

“Is it like the messaging system between dungeon explorers?”

“It’s a bit different. The messages ring in my ear, but this one rings in my head.”

“Uk, that doesn’t sound comfortable.”

There was no elevator in the building. In other words, we had to climb the stairs to the 13th floor. Since Ludia refused to unlink our arms, it was a bit uncomfortable, but Hwaya, who was wearing a long dress unsuitable for climbing stairs, seemed more irritated.

“Kuk, I don’t like this girl...! Telling my friend to come and go as she wants, and even making me climb these stairs...!”

“Ludia, can you let go? It’s hard to walk up the stairs like this.”

“No.”

“Four blind spots, seventeen points... If I install traps here...”

When I realized, Ye-Eun was analyzing the building and murmuring like some bomb expert. ‘Damn, I want to pretend not to know these people!’ Feeling the people’s gazes piercing me every floor we went to, I blamed the heavens.

When we arrived on the 13th floor, it was extremely quiet, unlike the floors we passed through. There was no one walking around,

and the hallway even looked different. Hwaya tilted her head and looked back at the stairs to the 12th floor. Then, she clapped once with a bright expression.

“This is a barrier. Anti-recognition barrier. A kind of conditional barrier.”

“Sorry, but can you explain it in a language I can understand?”

“It’s a barrier that prevents people that don’t know about the 13th floor from reaching the 13th floor.”

It was truly a simple, yet extraordinary, barrier. Ye-Eun and I were only slightly surprised, but Ludia looked shocked as she asked Hwaya.

“Such a high-rank magic is being used like this?”

“High-rank? It’s not that hard in the modern magic system.”

“Uuk....!”

Without my knowledge, Ludia’s losses were increasing. With a bitter smile, I knocked on room 1301 with them.

[It’s open, Hero-nim. Come in.]

Why was she using telepathy when we were within audible range? I opened the door. A large living room and, beyond the window, the Antelope Canyon transformed into a large canyon caught our eyes. We also saw several wyverns flying through the night sky and the ability users fighting against them.

At the same time, we saw a little girl sitting on a chair.

[Nice to meet you, Hero-nim and Hero-nim's companions.]

The girl got up and bowed respectfully.

[I am Ciara Kenex. You can call me Ciara.]

With her introduction, I could immediately tell why she couldn't move her body easily. I shouted.

"You're a kid"

[I'm 12 years old this year. I'm just a bit of a late bloomer.]

"A 12 year old is still a kid, you know..."

Ye-Eun murmured in shock. Ludia and Hwaya also had surprised expressions. As for me, I noticed something else the moment I saw her.

“... Can you not see?”

[I was born blind. At first, I couldn't hear or talk, but thankfully, my ears opened up as I grew.]

Even as she greeted us, she had her eyes closed. I asked because of it, but I didn't think I would actually be correct. Was that why she was talking to us in telepathy? Thankfully, we could all hear her through telepathy. She could likely see us through an ability similar to her telepathy.

As for her appearance, she was quite cute. It was a bit different than Koreans' black hair, but her charming black hair reached her waist in curls. With her small frame and white skin, she really looked like a doll.

Hwaya made a look of pity at Ciara's words, but soon erased it. She likely thought it was rude. As if to erase the thought from her mind, Hwaya asked quickly.

“Alright, since you called Shin here, can you tell us why Shin is the Hero? I'm quite curious too.”

I already explained to Hwaya and Ye-Eun in the plane. Although they made fun of me at first, Ludia got mad and told them about her continent. After that, Hwaya and Ye-Eun were more worried than me. I knew how annoying and dangerous being a Hero was, but it seemed like someone else's problem until they began to make a big deal about it. As a result, even I felt a bit odd.

[Hero-nim, are they...?]

“Yeah, you can trust them. Also, don’t call me Hero-nim. Call me Shin.”

[... Understood, Shin-nim. Then, I’ll start from the beginning. From the moment I first awakened. It was 3 years ago...]

“Wait.”

Hwaya immediately interrupted her.

“Two Moon only happened a year and two months ago. 3 years? That’s impossible!”

[But I awakened 3 years ago.]

“What...?”

Ye-Eun and I, who understood what she meant a bit late, were also shocked. What was she saying? She awakened before Two Moon? 2 years at that! Although Hwaya wanted to say something, I reached out and stopped her. I believed Ciara would explain.

She also said she awakened from a premonition-like dream. She had come of age, and was standing next to me. There were also countless other people and giant enemies. In her dream, she taught people when and in what size monsters would appear, and how

strong they would be. Resistance against the monsters were centered around her.

[Perhaps because my ability is still lacking, but its range is only wide enough to cover a city.]

“That’s an amazing ability, especially in this day and age, where even satellites are being shot down by monsters’ attacks. If your ability can really grow to how it was in your dream...”

[Hero-nim was the strongest and most radiant among them.]

“You don’t need to flatter me.”

[After that dream, I became more sensitive to human presence. I could feel their hostility towards me, how strong they were, how much potential they had... Of course, before Two Moon, there were no monsters in this world and no ability users, so it wasn’t that useful.]

That wasn’t it. The day after she awakened her ability, she once again dreamt several hundred dreams.

“... Wait. Several hundred?”

[Yes. In my dreams, I saw countless particles of light. There were countless number of oddities.]

“Countless oddities...?”

[The dream continued. For 2 years, I saw and experienced hundreds of thousands of abilities. Worlds and environments other than Earth. They fought each other, demons, invaders, alien insects, bugs that lived in the mind, monsters that lived in electromagnetic waves, orcs with countless mutations, fallen group of dragons that lost their intelligence and others.]

“I don’t understand...”

No, I think I understood. The problem was that I understood. If she was telling the truth, it would be truly absurd.

[One day, around early evening, I fell asleep. I had a dream, and I met someone who gave me a portion of power.]

“The world’s power?”

I said blankly. Damn, I felt like I understood. Although it sucked, I think I knew.

[Our world’s power is especially large. He kept saying inexplicable things like the World of Origin or the World of End.]

“Who is he?”

[I don’t know. He could be the embodiment of the worlds, or

perhaps just Earth. All I know is that he was worried about the monsters stealing this world's power and worried that people of Earth wouldn't have the power to resist them.]

“...”

[So he separated the world's power into two. The smaller power, which was still necessary to maintain this world, was given to Hero-nim. The bigger power, which was more pure, was given to me. Of course, it was too big for me to bear it alone.]

After hearing until there, I asked.

“You... created the ability users?”

She answered.

[Yes, Hero-nim.]

Author's note:

Huu, one secret has been revealed.

Right, Ciara was young! (Bang!)

I'm kidding, of course. I'm sure everyone understands that the secret I mentioned wasn't about that. In any case, with this, I hope

no one asks if Ciara is a heroine...

It's the start of a new chapter. Once the talk with Ciara is over, you'll see Shin and his companions shining within wyverns and new ability users.

I got a lot of criticisms about the girls' relationships last chapter and also a lot of encouragements. I think everyone said it because they're fond of the story and its characters.

As I said before, not everyone can be happy. There were good advices here and there, of course! Regardless... the story will take the direction I think is best.

If there's anything you don't like, that's unfortunate, but I hope you can continue to enjoy this novel. If there's one thing I can promise you, it's that I will be happy if you can continue with this lacking author.

Then, see you tomorrow!

Chapter 128. Team Revival (2)

Everyone was lost for words. However, I organized my thoughts and asked her a question.

“How did you choose them?”

[I didn't choose them. They were already chosen. I simply picked the right dreams to send to the chosen ones. Though, I did have to use my precognitive power to read their future.]

“So it's you that decides whether someone awakens a D rank ability or an SS rank ability?”

[No. Like I said before, it's important how well an ability suits its master. Plus, people have their own talents and limits. If they are given abilities that aren't suitable for them, it might end in tragedy. That's why it's important to choose which abilities go to who. If I give abilities to those who meet all the conditions, I'm not left with many choices.]

In other words, she wasn't as omnipotent as I thought. A sense of distance I felt from her had been reduced somewhat. However...

“Why didn't this ‘being’ do this task himself?”

[I'm not sure. It could have something to do with the world's power.]

That was the most important part, but it seemed Ciara did not have the answer to it. While I was thinking over the things I heard, Ludia asked.

“So you’re saying, you’re the one who gave me the power of the earth?”

[Yes. I was surprised because someone who had to receive an ability suddenly appeared. But since I was certain, I gave you a suitable ability. It should be S+ rank.]

“...”

Ludia became speechless. I understood where she was coming from. I asked Ciara once again.

“Why were you chosen? I mean, why was such a great authority and mission given to a young child like you?”

[Hero-nim, that is the same as asking, ‘Why am I the Hero?']

“You mean...”

[I don’t know either.]

The moment I heard that, I felt strength leaving my body. Did I expect too much? My motivation plummeted. I wanted to go back home. When I staggered, Ludia silently held me.

[Sorry. I don't know why Hero-nim and I were chosen.]

“I told you, call me Shin.”

“Also, don't tie yourself together with Shin. It's unpleasant.”

I retorted, and Hwaya added a completely irrelevant comment. Listening to her, I suddenly remembered that we had not talked about the most important thing.

“What was the reason you called me here? Was it to tell me your ability? To tell me how people awakened their abilities?”

[That's part of the reason. I wanted to let Hero... Shin-nim know about my existence. You are the World's Core, entrusted with the world's power. You are someone who will lead all the Awakened and someone I should support from the side.]

“And what does this ‘support’ include?”

She was most likely waiting for this question. Her face seemed to brighten. As she answered, I felt a hint of eagerness from her voice.

[I have both funds and manpower prepared. I'm ready to do anything for Hero-nim. Since Hero-nim has the qualification to lead all the Awakened, a new group will be created for that

purpose! A group that is not tied to the government like Guardian, nor tied to money like Freedom Wing. A group solely to save the world!]

‘Mm, I see.’ I nodded and said, “Go find someone else.”

[Hero-nim?]

“I was wondering what you were going to say.”

Because it was more boring than I thought, I lost all interest. With a snort, I turned around.

“Let’s go, guys.”

“Shin, I’m hungry.”

“I’m tired... I want to sleep.”

“Where’s the person in charge? I hope he can get each of us our own room. Shin, want to drink before sleep?”

[Wait, Hero-nim! You’re going to go back?]

Ciara stopped me. Without turning around, I replied.

“No, I’m going to party here. I’m curious how wyverns look

like.”

[In that case, can we meet tomorrow to talk? We have to discuss things in more detail! I have a lot of data organized.]

“Sorry, but I heard everything I needed to. Like I said, you should go find someone else.”

[Hero-nim!]

“My name is Shin. Plus... I don’t need something like that. I hate only bothersome things. Leading all Awakened? Like you said there are two organizations that move with money or government orders, so you should ask them instead.”

[But this is something Hero-nim needs! Soon, dungeons will be mass created, and the monsters’ threats will become greater! Hero-nim will be the first one they will aim for! To protect Hero-nim...]

“Dungeons will be mass created soon?”

Now that she mentioned in, she did say something about the second wave in her letter. It seemed she was talking about Event Dungeons. Telling myself to take note, I replied.

“In any case, I’ll protect my own body. You want me to gather ability users to protect myself and play Hero? I’m not interested. Don’t make me come and go for something like this again. I’ll let it slide this time since I wanted to visit the Wyvern’s Nest anyways.”

[Hero-nim!]

“I have a lot to say, but since you have a lot to learn, I won’t say anything. See you. Ah, one more thing...”

[Yes, Hero-nim?]

I turned around. Even though she couldn’t see with her eyes, she must have realized I turned around with her ability as she fixed her posture on the chair and raised her head.

“What do you think about the dungeon?”

[If they aren’t taken care of quickly, they will cause harm to this world. If Hero-nim leads the dungeon subjugation, you will be able to quickly gather support and...]

“That’s fine.”

With that, I left the room. Hwaya, Ludia, and Ye-Eun read the atmosphere and also left without saying anything. I could hear Ciara trying to contact me with her telepathy, but it was cut off when I raised my mana. In the end, her telepathy was an ability that interfered with its target. If I wanted, I could easily defend myself from it.

While walking down to the 12th floor, I quietly said, “As I

thought, she doesn't know about it."

"Yeah, I thought she would."

"But if you think about it, she never appeared in our dreams either."

"Maybe she can't see the dungeon with her ability."

'Even though she could see other worlds?' I asked inwardly. When we were about halfway down the stairs, Hwaya, who was walking down on my right, said with worry.

"Shin, the Kenex family is one of the most powerful families in America. It's probably true that she has the funds and manpower. I don't know how much her family will support her, but this could be an important opportunity. After all, what she said wasn't wrong... Plus, she has information about you. This might be more dangerous than you being the Hero."

"She's not that type of person. She won't tell others the secrets she knows."

I was certain. It was a special privilege to know that I'm the Hero. She said that she was 'chosen', while equating herself with me. It could have been to instill the idea that we were natural allies, but she was incredibly proud about it. It sounded like she was putting herself and me in a special position compared to others. It was exactly something kids her age would think of.

As such, she would never tell someone about me. She won't give others a chance to intervene. Of course, even if she did...

"I hate doing things according to others' plans. Just thinking about it gives me goosebumps."

Create an organization because the manpower was there? It was something elementary school kids would say. Though, I couldn't say anything since she really was an elementary school kid. Although I had forgotten about it because of her mature way of talking, Ciara was a kid. It was obvious from how she reacted when I didn't respond the way she thought that I would.

I was never thankful of the fact that I became a Hero. I didn't know who made me a Hero or why, but I didn't like that he left this heavy burden on me without saying a thing, and it was extremely irritating that he did so without my consent. If we ever met, I would punch him in the face. I had no intention of feeling responsible as a Hero since I never asked for it.

Additionally, I didn't like Ciara's idea that I had to lead everyone and protect myself because I became an existence that was not allowed to die. In the end, it meant I should sacrifice others to protect myself. It was exactly the kind of thing I hated.

I will get strong. So that no matter who comes after me to obtain this power inside me, I can send them flying with my own strength. Since the world ended when the Hero died, everyone should cooperate with me? That was why the Heroes had high

charm? Fuck that.

Damn, because I met an irritating person and talked about irritating things, I ended up getting irritated.

There was only one way to relieve my stress. It was to go wild.

“You guys should go look for our housing. I need to stop by somewhere.”

“Where?”

Ye-Eun tilted her head and asked. On the other hand, Hwaya looked like she knew what I meant.

“You... At this time of day?”

“Stupid, don’t you know night fishing is the best?”

With that, I left them. Seeing Ye-Eun block Ludia, who was trying to chase after me, I gave her a thumbs up. Then, I headed straight to the canyon.

Obviously, wyverns were flying monsters. They had scales stronger than steel with wingspan that easily reached 20 meters. Their claws were strong enough to break diamonds. They could be thought of as miniature versions of dragons that appeared in western fantasies.

They were strong and tough enough to be called dragons. They even breathed fire. Plus, they quickly soared through the sky and snatched up their prey. Even experienced martial artists had difficulty responding to their crafty movements. It was hard to shoot them down with magic, and it took forever to take them down with melee weapons. It was understandable that the Field Dungeon stayed uncleared even though several months had passed since the Graveyard Over the Lake was cleared.

Even in the dead of night, the wyverns' hunting continued. Ability users were also running around frantically, trying to protect their own lodging and ordinary citizens living in a city not far from here. Since they were likely all S ranked or higher, I couldn't fathom just what percentage of the world's rankers were here.

Equipping my armor, putting on my cape, and putting down my helmet's visor, I completely concealed my appearance. Then, I joined the ability users.

"Hey, this is a S rank Field Dungeon! Entering alone is strictly prohibited!"

"Wait, I saw that red armor somewhere."

"He... He's Thunder Knight!"

"Thunder Knight? Why is he alone? I heard the Flame Witch came with him."

People who noticed me opened a path as they tilted their heads. With a grin, I stepped into the canyon. The canyon, which was only wide enough for a few people to walk side by side, had been widened so much that the entire business department could walk side by side. There were already several surveillance devices and large headlights to light up the darkness. I could also see numerous ability users ready to fight wyverns whenever they appeared.

I had Talaria. With it, I could freely fly for 30 minutes per day. However, since I wasn't planning on hunting wyverns for 30 minutes only, I couldn't solely rely on Talaria. Looking at the wyverns flying in the sky far away, I called my elementals.

“Ruyue, you should leave the egg there.”

[Okay...]

Ruyue went to return the egg in Fairy Garden with a sad expression. Meanwhile, I infused Peika into my gauntlet. My affinity with Peika grew day by day ever since I obtained Zeus' true name. Now, just by having Peika infuse into my gauntlet, it radiated golden brilliance and flickered with threatening sparks. People watching me flinched and took several steps back.

[I left it! Now, hug me!]

“Ruyue, come inside my boots.”

[I'm not materializing?]

“You can't fly.”

[Kukuku, serves you right!]

Ruyue infused herself into my boots with a sad expression, while Peika sneered at her. Thinking how friendly they were, I looked up at the sky again. At that moment, a red-scaled wyvern that was flying through the sky suddenly began to descend swiftly. By the flash in its eyes, it seemed it discovered me. People nearby began to scatter, and some of them contacted others with their radio.

“Alpha Area 3-7, a wyvern descended! Again, Alpha Area 3-7, a wyvern descended! It's alone, and is aiming for Thunder Knight! Requesting immediate reinforcement!”

‘You guys are so nice!’ I was pleasantly surprised. Technically, I was only a fool that walked into a restricted area and drew a wyvern's aggro. Thinking rather useless things, I bent my knees. The wyvern was extremely fast. It seemed it would reach me in about 2 seconds.

However, it was no match for me.

“Divine Speed!”

The moment I activated Divine Speed, I jumped with full force. With how long I spent my time grinding through the dungeon, I

could easily leap dozens of meters into the air. With the addition of Divine Speed, I was in front of the wyvern in less than 0.5 seconds. Glaring at the wyvern blinking its eyes extremely slowly, I pulled my fist back.

“I don’t even need a second to kill you! Tempest!”

Centered around my fist containing formidable lightning energy, a small yet powerful whirlpool raged. As Peruta Circuit’s level increased, the power of the whirlpool increased. I shot out my fist without a shred of hesitation. Under the effect of Divine Speed, my fist struck the wyvern’s head faster than a typhoon.

[Critical Hit!]

With a lucky critical hit, the wyvern’s head exploded. I burned the splashing brain with lightning energy and smiled. Feeling the pent up irritation disappearing, I shouted so that my voice could reach the entire canyon.

“Come at me, you damned flying lizards!!”

The night hunt was only now starting!

Author’s note:

Shin is a bit strong now. He has Peika and Ruyue's power, and even learned (recently) that Peruta Circuit could be used in Martial Arts Technique. With that, it shouldn't be hard for Shin to clear an S rank Field Dungeon.

Next chapter is the start of the subjugation of Wyvern's Nest. Look forward to Shin's party and other rankers!

Chapter 129. Team Revival (3)

I've been thinking about something for a while, and I realized it was possible during my fights against the Wendigo. It was that I could stay in the air using Ruyue's power.

Of course, it would be best if Ruyue could fly, but she was a wolf. She did not have wings, so she could not fly. Even so, I wanted to freely move in the sky. Talaria's duration was too short. I needed a more consistent and long-lasting method.

What I thought of was to infuse Ruyue into my boots. With my proficiency in Spirit Aura and affinity with Ruyue, I could freeze anything my boots touched. It might only seem useful when I attacked with my feet, but there was another purpose. With it, I would be able to walk on air. Using Spirit Aura, I would freeze a portion of the air below my feet, creating a temporary step out of ice. Once I stepped off, I would take away the elemental power and the temporary step would disappear. That way, I wouldn't use much mana, and once I got used to it, I would be able to stay in midair for a long time. I considered making a hoverboard out of ice and controlling it with Ruyue's power, but I gave up since that would consume too much mana.

At first, I wasn't sure if it would work well, but there was no problem when I tested it. With Spirit Aura, I could accurately create circular steps where my feet touched. By leaping from off of them and retrieving the mana from the steps I already created, the ice would lose the power to maintain itself and disappear. I realized it was quite simple and convenient. Plus, it felt really good. I could fly in the sky without any restraints! Though, in order to not waste mana, I couldn't walk, only jump to cover more

distance.

In any case, thanks to this realization, I could freely go wild at the Wyvern's Nest.

“Th... Thunder Knight is...”

“He's walking on air. Is that his ability, too?”

“Look under his feet. He's stepping on something. It's hard to see because it's night, but it shines when you expose it to light.”

Spotting a wyvern flying through the sky, I once again kicked off the ice step. It also saw me and flew toward me while breathing fire. I quickly created an ice step and jumped.

[Guaaaa!]

The wyvern cut off its fire and looked up. Then, it started breathing fire again. I charged into it. Although I roused Ruyue's power and created a barrier using her freezing energy, I couldn't completely block the wyvern's flames. I could feel my armor getting hot. If I was in the dungeon, I could probably see my HP falling.

Without paying it much attention, I sent my fist inside its mouth.

[Kuhak!]

The wyvern made a strange cry and tried to spit out my fist, but I wrapped my other arm around its neck and concentrated my mana in my fist.

“Peika!”

[Thunder Bomb!]

[Kuaaaaa!]

The shock of the lightning explosion caused the wyvern’s flames to cease. Thanks to Ruyue, my armor, which had gotten hot enough to cook eggs, cooled down. Meanwhile, I pushed my fist deeper into its mouth.

“Die! Tempest!”

[Thunder Bomb!]

Tempest and Thunder Bomb were mixed together. The mana whirlpool, which had reached a certain level of attainment, took in Thunder Bomb and transformed into a violent lightning storm. Immediately afterwards, the wyvern’s head exploded into pieces. Hah, what was this incredibly refreshing feeling...?

[You created the skill, ‘Thunder Tempest’! By adding strong

lightning's explosive force to the whirlpool created by Peruta Circuit, you can deliver a deadly blow to your target! Unlike Elemental Tempest, which strengthened the whirlpool with nearby elementals, Thunder Tempest is powered by lightning elemental power and focuses its destructive force in a small area. By using at least 5% of your mana, it deals a powerful lightning attribute explosion damage to your target. By adding more mana, you can increase its destructive force. As the skill's creator, the skill level is adjusted to mid-rank level 2.]

[You created a skill! Thunder Tempest is a variation of Elemental Tempest. While it's more suited for one-on-one battles, it maintains an overwhelming destructive force. This skill, which shows its creator's high level of attainment in Peruta Circuit and elemental magic, contains a destructive force that no one can ignore. You obtained 1 skill point as reward. Current skill points: 3]

I knew it! I had really created a new skill. I didn't know mixing Tempest and Thunder Bomb would create such a powerful skill. Wait, I could probably use this with a spear too! My excitement grew from the unexpected skill and the skill point I obtained.

“Alright, let's continue.”

I grinned inside my helmet. If I could relieve my frustration, I didn't care what came my way. As I was now, I felt like I could destroy everything.

“Get over here, you damned lizards!!”

[You used Provoke! Nearby enemies' hostility becomes fixed onto you!]

My shout, which rang out through the entire canyon, even caused other people to react.

“Eh? Was Thunder Knight French?”

“What are you talking about? He just spoke in German.”

“Don't lie, that was Japanese.”

Well, as long as I had the choker on, I would get found out anyways. You guys can think however you want!

I grinned on the ice step I was standing on. Creating whirlpools mixed with lightning on both hands, I slammed them together. The wyverns were getting closer. Tomorrow, I would have an enjoyable wyvern meat party.

Until 6 A.M., I was completely absorbed with hunting wyverns. In the end, I managed to hunt almost 70 wyverns by myself. When I landed after killing the last wyvern, people began to murmur.

“He wasn't that strong when he was in Britain.”

“He was strong, but not as strong as them.”

“But now...”

“He’s an SS ranker.”

On the other hand, there were some who came to talk to me directly. It was a Caucasian man, who seemed to be part of America’s Guardian. He was wearing an armor engraved with Guardian’s emblem.

“I’m America’s S ranker, John Smith.”

“John Smith?”

“It’s my real name.”

That was the fake name I wanted! How unfortunate. I wanted to be called John Smith instead of something strange like T.K. John Smith, who had become the target of my envy, pointed at the wyvern I just fell and asked.

“If you’d like, we can collect the wyverns you hunted for you. Of course, we won’t do anything else.”

“Why? That seems too good of an offer.”

I had planned on letting Hwaya collect them later with her usual extradimensional storage excuse, but I tilted my head at the unexpected offer.

“It the least we can do. You came to America from a foreign country and reduced the number of wvyerns greatly in a single night. Taking care of the monster corpses should be the least we can do to thank you for your work.”

“Ah... I see.”

Now that I thought about it, it made sense. In any case, I was happy that there was less work for me to do. Collecting all 70 wyverns would have been tedious, but since they should be able to monitor the entire canyon, they should be able to do it quicker.

“Hm, then you guys can have 10 of them.”

“No, we didn’t make the offer to get any benefits.”

“It’s fine. It’ll be to thank you for your work. Will 10 be enough?”

“It’s more than enough. Wyverns are rare monsters, so we hunt however many we can. If you’d like to sell the other 60, we’ll pay a generous amount for them.”

For the record, he said each wyverns were over 2.3 million

dollars. In Korean won, that was 2.5 billion won. Geez, they were a billion won more expensive than the melting tunas! Wait, doesn't that mean I just made over 180 billion won? No matter how much money I made, I never used it, so I didn't realize just how much it was. For a moment, I thought, 'Was giving 10 away too much?' I should have asked for the price first! However, as a ranker, it was unsightly to ask for them back.

I asked while trying to calm myself.

"Then I'll sell 20 of them for now."

"Understood. We can talk about the details in the afternoon after getting some rest. Of course, we'll collect all the wyvern corpses until then."

"Sure."

I returned to the lodging. Even though I cleansed myself of the wyverns' blood and flesh with Ruyue's power, it was impossible to dodge them completely. The Guardian employee at the lobby became startled when he saw me, and led me to the shower room. As expected of a place for rankers, there were private shower rooms for each. I could finally take my mask off.

"Huu..."

Even though I relieved my stress using the wyverns, I was reminded of what happened last night under the hot shower water.

The shocked Ciara, and Hwaya who looked at me with worry. Ludia wasn't in a state to talk about Heroes and Ye-Eun was worried about me, but Hwaya was different.

She considered Ciara's offer realistically and asked if I was okay with refusing her. She knew how dangerous being a Hero was, and thought it was better for the world and for my safety to accept her offer.

“Organization, huh...”

It would be a lie if I said I never considered it. It would be a lie if I said I never considered myself in the shoes of other continents' Heroes, who fought against their worlds' enemies as their worlds' cores.

It was irritating and uncomfortable in that it was an unavoidable future, but it was also something exciting, cool, and mystical that every boy dreamed of. A man fighting with the world's fate on the line. It was quite cliché. Plus, it wasn't that I didn't like being safer. I wasn't that stupid.

I didn't want to die. I was worried about my family, friends, Ludia who was relying on me, and... Loretta, who would be hurt.

There were many things I had to protect. Many people I loved and many that loved me back.

That was why I was even more afraid.

That I'd use countless number of people just because the world's fate was on the line. That many people would die to protect me. I was afraid of the blood that would flow under the name of Hero.

I was afraid. It was disgusting and fearful.

As such...

"I have to get strong."

I had to get stronger. Strong enough to crush everything with my own strength.

I remembered Luka continent.

In face of the world's ruin, I remembered the people who joined hands with the demons to save themselves.

In face of the world's ruin, I remembered the emperor, who sacrificed his life for those who had not enjoyed their life to their fullest.

If the Hero didn't die, such things wouldn't have happened. Traitors wouldn't have had to join hands with the demons to save themselves, and the emperor could have put his life on the line for the future, not the present. However, the Hero died, and the world fell. My friend despaired and her parents died a dog's death.

As such, Earth's Hero will not die. He was not allowed to. To not die, he had to get stronger. Overwhelming so, as to not create meaningless deaths.

I turned off the shower head. I wiped my body with a towel and pondered. I thought about a way to solve this problem.

I couldn't think of anything. As always.

Author's note:

Shin is not perfect as a main character, both physically and mentally. You could say he's still inexperienced, but it won't stay that way forever.

He thought the dungeon only as a place where he could get stronger. In face of reality, that will slowly change. What awaits him, what decisions he will make, please wait and see. You will not be disappointed.

Chapter 130. Team Revival (4)

After taking a shower, I got dressed and went to the lobby, where I saw Hwaya sitting by herself on a table and drinking. It was whiskey. Because I felt like my hair wasn't dry yet, I thought about taking off my mask to dry my hair, but I was then surprised when I saw her.

“What are you doing here so early in the morning!?”

“Someone stood me up last night, so I'm here drinking in the morning to make up for it.”

“What, I already told you that I was going to be out hunting.”

“I didn't think you'd stay there the whole night. Do you know how hard it was to make that girl sleep? I was with Ye-Eun too. I really didn't think you'd hunt wyverns the entire night...”

Hwaya pouted. With a shrug, I apologized and sat across the table. Hwaya, who was staring at me fixedly, then asked.

“I want to see your face. I want to know what expression you're making.”

“No.”

“With how strong you are, you can probably show yourself... Are

you still afraid?”

At Hwaya’s provocative smile, I snorted and took a sip from the bottle of whiskey. My strengthened body barely reacted to the alcohol. Putting the bottle down, I responded.

“I won’t fall for provocations.”

“How rude. You stole my drink. Plus, you’re a coward.”

“So, what’s the reason you’re drinking whiskey alone where everyone can see you?”

At my question, Hwaya grinned and messaged me.

[I didn’t think I could say it when I was with the others. I wanted to say it last night, but you stood me up.]

[Yeah, yeah. I already apologized. So, what is it? Ciara Kenex?]

[No, Palludia.]

“Uk.”

Hwaya’s eyes were shining strangely.

[That girl is weird. You didn’t explain yesterday. What’s her

problem? Why is she so obsessed with you? I haven't seen a girl like her in a while.]

[So there are people like her?]

[That's another story. Did something happen in the world you went to as a Dimensional Mercenary? Did she become like that because her world fell? What happened?]

[Mm, sorry. It's a secret.]

[Hey.]

[Sorry, but I don't think I should tell you, or anyone else for that matter.]

“... Hu.”

Hwaya let out a sigh. She raised her cup to take a drink, but she realized that it was empty. She reached towards the bottle of whiskey, but I took it away before she could get it.

“Your constitution isn't that strong. Stop before you get drunk. Do you even want to drink something I drank with my mouth?”

“You're pretty good...”

Hwaya sighed again and took her hand off her glass.

“Fine, let’s stop drinking. Sorry. I shouldn’t have asked you so suddenly. I was just feeling impatient, unlike my usual self. It was just completely unexpected, so I was surprised.”

“There’s a reason for it, so try to understand.”

“Yeah, I’ll try, though I probably won’t succeed.”

“How honest.”

I smiled. Hwaya also smiled and continued.

“That’s enough, right?”

“Yeah.”

[Ciara Kenex too?]

[... Yeah.]

Hwaya stared at me for a while, but soon got up while smiling.

[Alright, I’ll trust you. I was hesitating too, since it would get complicated if the Kenex family intervened. Plus, if there’s an enemy you can’t handle, I doubt anyone from the Kenex family

could help.]

[This is what you really wanted to talk about, right?]

“It’s both. They’re both important to me. Anyways, let’s go wake them up and go out for breakfast. I’m hungry.”

Hwaya answered nonchalantly and left. Looking at her back as she walked away, I thought that it was a miracle that I got to know her.

The moment Ludia opened her eyes, she jumped on my arm, but since she had to get changed, I got her off with Hwaya and Ye-Eun’s help. As this continued, I hoped her symptoms would slowly disappear. Once she changed, she clung to my arm again, making me somewhat doubtful. After we had breakfast, we went straight to the Field Dungeon. I wasn’t particularly tired and neither were my companions.

“Shin, I can’t fly in the air like you, so what should I do?”

“You’ll see once we get there. Also, make sure not to call me by my name. If you need to, use the dungeon’s message system.”

I could hunt the wyverns alone, but most melee-range fighters could not do so. Most of the Awakened scattered around the Field Dungeon were members of the American Guardian. They watched over and reported the slightest changes in the dungeon. When wyverns descended, they called nearby parties and hunted them

together.

Those that hunted wyverns more actively always had long-ranged attackers with close-ranged attackers. They first drew the wyverns toward them with long-ranged attacks and had the close-ranged attackers fight them. However, since the wyverns here seemed capable of communicating with each other, they would have to fight two wyverns at once if they were unlucky. As such, most parties didn't hunt by themselves and cooperated with the other countries' ability users.

Some ability users, however, gave up the ground to fight the wyverns in the sky. They rode in helicopters to fight them.

“Isn't that more dangerous?”

“It's called an attack helicopter, but yeah, that sounds more dangerous.”

Once hit by the wyverns' flames, a helicopter would just become a chunk of scrap metal. Even attack helicopters, made from monster materials for the purpose of hunting monsters, could not withstand the wyverns' flames for long. If wyverns headbutted, clawed, or bit the helicopter, it would go down sooner.

As such, when fighting a wyvern on a helicopter, the party had to consist of ideal members. One long-ranged attacker, one defense magic user to protect the helicopter from the wyvern's attacks, and one close-ranged attack who had the maneuverability to jump on the wyvern to take its life and jump back to safety. As that would

take time, it was better to have two close-range attackers.

“Are there teams like that?”

“One or two from what I could tell. Most of the others fight on the ground with the method I told you about.”

Seeing is believing, or so the saying went. In the Field Dungeon’s sky, we could clearly see two helicopters flying around and fighting the wyverns. I couldn’t say they were fast, but they were at least faster than the parties on the ground, who could only wait for wyverns to come near them. Of course, they were incomparably slower than I was last night. Plus, the moment they made a mistake, the helicopter would fall. I heard helicopters made with monster materials cost over 150 billion won, so one of those things had to kill at least 60 wyverns to make up for its cost... Though, that wasn’t exactly true since they could get lucky and find Mana Stones in the wyverns. After all, a Mana Stone from wyverns were about 10 billion won.

Since even S rankers had such difficulty fighting them, it was no wonder that the Wyvern’s Nest was taking so long to get cleared. At first, they employed many methods to hunt the wyverns more easily, but mechanical devices were destroyed and magical devices were broken from the wyverns’ high mana resistance. In the end, only ability users were left to toil. Although I had not experienced it myself, when I thought about all the proud rankers having difficulty hunting wyverns, I couldn’t help but feel bad for them.

“There should be other people who can use ice steps. Or wind steps, maybe.”

“Most ice or wind ability users that are S ranked or above are long-ranged types. There’s no way they would fly in the sky and put themselves in danger.”

“Can’t they fly together with close-range attackers?”

“They’ll end up falling to death after running out of mana!”

Hwaya shouted and stopped my rude imagination. Then, after looking at how people were hunting the wyverns for a bit, she asked.

“Can we rent a helicopter?”

“It’s not a bicycle, you know.”

“It’s possible.”

“Uhuk!?”

When I turned around, John Smith was there. With an amiable smile, he answered.

“I came to talk about the average cost of wyverns and the ones you’ve chosen to sell. Since you were asking something I could answer, I did so.”

“T-Thanks. Let’s start with the wyverns.”

“Yes. In truth, wyverns are different in sizes and quality of the skin. Most of their skin were in perfect shape, though I can’t say the same for their heads. You are truly amazing. Since the size of the wyverns change their cost, Thunder Knight-nim will have to choose which wyverns to sell.”

We then went to the area where the wyverns I hunted last night were gathered. Large wyverns over 20 meters long were piled up on top of each other. It was quite the sight. Because of the mountain of wyvern corpses, sunlight couldn’t even reach us.

“You hunted all this by yourself...!?”

“I expected as much, but...”

Ye-Eun exclaimed in surprise and Hwaya spoke with a dumbfounded expression.

“We chose the cheapest wyverns for the ten you have chosen to give us. If you’re curious, we could bring them back and show you. Is that okay?”

“No, it’s fine. You don’t need to move them again.”

“Plus, most of their heads were blown up. If you obtained any

Mana Stones, we would love to buy them too.”

“Sorry, but I have my own uses for them.”

I would get more than enough money from selling the wyverns’ corpses anyways. If they were willing to pay so much for the wyverns’ corpses and Mana Stones, it meant they had appropriate uses for them. In that case, they would be highly valued in the dungeon as well. I wanted to first secure the Mana Stones and the wyverns’ corpses. I might have to visit Lin soon.

I sold 20 wyverns on the spot for over 60 billion won. Since I didn’t have an account for ability users other than the one for Yeon Hwawoo, they created an account for me with the 60 billion won. That said, I didn’t know where to spend all this money. Maybe I should fill the swimming pool in Marianne’s Garden with shrimp crackers...

Plus, we could rent an attack helicopter for free. After hearing it was 130 million dollars, I felt a bit hesitant.

“Well, if there’s any problem, I could just buy it.”

“Don’t underestimate by barrier.”

With Hwaya and Ludia’s double attack, I got on the helicopter. Ye-Eun, who considered 100 million won to be an enormous sum, trembled and got on with a frown. Now that she was a high-ranking ability user, I knew her sense of money would change

eventually. In a way, it was sad.

“We should make a team name too!”

Once the helicopter took off, Ye-Eun made a excited suggestion. Ludia seemed to agree as well. It seemed she was obsessed with making connections with people.

Surprisingly, Hwaya supported it as well.

“Right, it’s good for fostering a sense of camaraderie and for letting other knows who we are.”

“Are there other famous parties?”

“Of course. Guardian’s team names often come up on mass media, and it’s the same from Freedom Wing. Rogue teams get paid according to how famous they are, not the ranking of their team members.”

[Shin, you should really show more interest in other people.]

“You’re right, but that’s because I only care about people who are important to me.”

I acknowledged what Ye-Eun messaged. Then, Hwaya swung the staff she was holding at my forehead. I, of course, blocked it with my hands.

“You shouldn’t be proud, idiot. If you keep living like a child, you’ll be dead before you even realize.”

“I know it’s a problem... but I don’t have much free time.”

Climbing the dungeon every day, going to university, and training... I was especially busy lately. I had my excuses, but I should really expand my horizon like Hwaya said...

When I showed signs of self-reflection, Hwaya took back her staff.

“Revival.”

Ludia announced.

“It has to be Revival.”

“Revival? That’s unexpected. Why?”

[That’s the guild he made.]

[Guild!? Shin, you made a guild? Don’t you need a mansion!?!]

[Ah, yeah. I do have one, so I took the opportunity to make a guild.]

[I want in! Let me in Shin's guild!]

[I thought you'd say that. Go ahead. You'll probably cry if I refuse.]

“Yay!”

Ye-Eun bounced in joy inside the helicopter. Since the pilot couldn't hear our messages, he was probably weirded out by the strange flow of our conversation. On the other hand, Hwaya didn't look happy.

[If it's First Dungeon's guild, I can't enter it...! No, wait, I should have been the one to create a guild... But I don't have a mansion!]

[Mm... Right, sorry, Hwaya.]

[No, I'll become a First Dungeon explorer for sure. Kuk, since I don't have a mansion, I'll have to enter your guild... Kuuk!]

“Then let's go with Revival for the team name.”

Hwaya looked unhappy that she couldn't be the leader, but she still agreed on the team name. ‘You learned to swallow your pride. You matured, Hwaya...!’

[We can make you the team's leader, Hwaya.]

[No, it's fine. It would look weird if I'm the leader. Besides, you gathered the members, so you should be the leader. But if you ever give me the position of the guild leader, I'll become the team leader too!]

'I don't think that's going to happen...' I thought about it, then realized it was Hwaya's way of acknowledging me as the leader. In a way, she got embarrassed easily.

Just like that, we became Team Revival. When we yelled hurrah with a sense of camaraderie, the helicopter pilot suddenly shouted.

"There's a wyvern coming straight toward us!"

Tell us earlier!

"O Mitarus! O Earth!"

Ludia quickly created a barrier around the helicopter. The wyvern that appeared in front of the helicopter began to breath out fire. However, it could not penetrate Ludia's barrier. In anger, it tried to use physical attacks, as it folded its wings and flew toward the helicopter. Although Ludia said it would be fine, I was slightly worried whether her barrier could withstand the wyvern's attack. I immediately prepared myself to jump out of the helicopter.

However, before the wyvern could reach the helicopter, the

sound of a machine gun rang out like the one I heard in movies. Along with it, the wyvern became a beehive. Without even screaming, the wyvern fell to the ground. I was astonished.

“... A gun? Against a monster?”

“I heard about it before. It should be...”

When Hwaya looked up, murmuring in a surprised voice, we saw a helicopter approaching us. It was a helicopter just like ours, but it was letting out a black luster. Plus, the machine gun attached under the helicopter was smoking as if it just fired. I was certain that it was that machine gun that killed the wyvern.

... But how? Guns shouldn't be able to kill wyverns, or most monsters with mana for that matter! While I was trying to figure out how it was possible, the black helicopter's window opened and a young man peeked his head out. He had black skin color and black hair with white teeth that shone under the sunlight. His smile was especially charming.

“Hey, guys! Don't forget to buy me a drink when you land!”

It was my first meeting with America's SS ranker, Leon Pepper.

Author's note:

America's SS ranker, Leon Pepper, has appeared! If you say, 'Hey,

you said you can't kill monsters with guns!' I can only say, 'He's the exception!' Look forward to finding out his ability and finding out what happens.

PS – 'Hey, guys!' Was in English. Why? To add character! That's it...

Chapter 131. Team Revival (5)

“Thanks for the help, but we could have killed it too.”

Hwaya responded with a snort, and the young man made an exclamation of surprise.

“Hwaya Mastiford, Britain’s SS ranker! I didn’t think you’d be here! Nice to meet you. I’m America’s SS ranker, Leon Pepper!”

“Y-Yeah.”

Hwaya became flustered at his overly high-tension greeting and nodded her head. I messaged her.

[Do you know about America’s SS ranker?]

[I’ve heard rumors. I know America’s SS ranker is African-American.]

After answering me, Hwaya greeted Leon Pepper.

“Let’s continue on the ground later. We’re in the middle of our enemies’ territory right now.”

“Hahaha! Alright, then we’ll have to take care of them quickly! See you in a bit!”

It seemed he was piloting the helicopter himself. The helicopter turned around and flew away. It met a wyvern not long after, and promptly obliterated it with its machine gun. It was truly mesmerizing.

“What is that!?”

“That’s his ability. Object Control, I think it was.”

As long as his ability could reach it, he could freely control any object. The SS ranker we met truly had a powerful ability. Unfortunately, as the range of his ability was for now limited to small vehicles, guns, and things like bazookas. Even so, it was an incredible ability. The most important thing was that he could empower objects under his control with mana, giving them destructive force that could pierce through usually impenetrable barriers.

A cheat, so to say.

“Damn, that’s cool...”

“Don’t worry, Shin’s cooler!”

“Yeah, his weapon is too simple and not sophisticated at all.”

Two of them comforted me, but it only made my sense of

competition rise.

“Alright, let’s do this. Let’s starting hunting the wyverns! Let’s show them Team Revival will not lose to anyone!”

“Ooooh!”

“Geez, men are all kids...”

Unlike Ye-eun and Ludia’s eager response, Hwaya’s cold gaze made me a bit embarrassed. In any case, we then started our wyvern hunt.

To be honest, our party was very, very outstanding. Even without me, who could hunt wyverns alone by flying, Hwaya was a long-range attacker with great firepower, Ludia had an overwhelming defensive and healing capability after obtaining the earth’s power to strengthen her holy magic, and Ye-Eun was a powerful close-range attacker. Ye-Eun could easily jump on approaching wyverns, take its neck, and jump back to the helicopter. Her agile movements almost resembled a spider’s.

Until lunch time, we continued hunting wyverns on the helicopter. The pilot foamed at my order to charge at any wyverns he saw, but after the first couple times, he seemed to have liked the taste of it, as he ran to any wyverns he saw without even asking us. In the end, we ended up hunting about a hundred wyverns in a few hours.

“Amazing!”

When we got down for a lunch break, Leon Pepper was waiting for us.

“Truly amazing! Is everyone a SS ranker?”

“Of course, not. Not officially, at least.”

I retorted mischievously with a smile. Pepper smiled back.

“With you guys, this tedious subjugation mission might finally end. I got a report that wyverns that left Antelope Canyon are returning too!”

“Because we killed so many of them?”

“Yes! After all, you guys are killing ten wyverns for every wyvern other people kill. Thanks for coming to America, Thunder Knight, Flame Witch, and...”

“Kyak.”

Ludia dodged Pepper’s eyes and hid behind my back. It was the same for Ye-Eun. With a bitter smile, I told Pepper, “They’re shy.”

“Huhu, two girls. How talented, Thunder Knight. Alright, I can

always greet them later! I told you before, but we should go out for a drink tonight. How about it?”

When he asked, Hwaya immediately messaged me.

[It’s okay, right? It’s our chance to become friends with a foreign country’s SS ranker.]

[Of course, it’s okay.]

When I answered, Hwaya looked at Leon Pepper and responded as she nodded her head.

“Sure. We can leave behind the kids who can’t drink, and go out with just us three.”

“I’m not a kid!”

“I can drink too!”

‘Rather than denying Hwaya’s words, you should realize you guys look like kids... Before Hwaya gets hooked on it at least.’ I sighed and calmed them down.

I didn’t know how other ability users would react when they heard this, but I thought hunting the wyverns at the Antelope Canyon was enjoyable. No wyverns could even touch our party, and the money we got from selling them was enormous even if it

were split among the four of us. Competing with Leon Pepper was fun too. Other than the gazes of envy and jealousy we were getting, there was no problem.

However, like Leon Pepper said when we first met, the number of wyverns in the canyon was increasing day by day. Wyverns that had escaped from their nest were all returning. Perhaps because they knew they would be in danger if this place was subjugated, they were attacking more actively.

“This is a good sign.”

Spinning the pistol he always carried around with his finger, Pepper muttered.

“It means we’ll run into their boss soon.”

“Boss... I’m looking forward to it.”

“Want to bet who’s going to kill it, T.K.?”

“I told you, don’t call me T.K... But sure, let’s bet.”

“It’s the boss of a S rank Field Dungeon. Graveyard Over the Lake was dangerous, so be more careful this time.”

When Pepper and I half-jokingly discussed on betting, Hwaya commented with a tired voice. Of course, I didn’t forget about

what happened at Windermere. Hwaya was especially surprised at the time and had worried about me. I didn't think Pepper would punch me to the boss' mouth, but it seemed Hwaya was worried about the boss fight in general. However, my companions and I were all too strong to be afraid of a S rank Field Dungeon boss. Although I shouldn't let my guard down, it wouldn't be good to be too conservative.

“Don't worry, Hwaya. We have reliable companions this time.”

“Are you implying I wasn't reliable?”

“You're included, obviously, but you couldn't intervene last time.”

“You've only gotten good at speaking.”

Hwaya pouted and tilted her glass of alcohol. Ever since the first time we drank with Pepper, Hwaya and I often sneaked out after Ludia and Ye-Eun fell asleep to drink with Pepper. Though, it was more that Pepper joined in when we were drinking with just the two of us.

“Are you guys dating?”

Pepper asked out of the blue. While I opened my eyes widely in surprise, he added.

“I thought you were dating that blonde lady, but you looked

rather uninterested. In that case, the Flame Witch was the next best candidate.”

“First, I’m friends with that blonde lady you’re talking about. She’s just overly reliant on me.”

I’d have to make her stop clinging to me one day. Though, that would be hard now.

After my retort, Hwaya added.

“T.K. and I are friends for now too. I don’t know what the future has in store for us though.”

“Hahaha!”

Pepper burst into laughter, and I stared at Hwaya’s strange response. However, Hwaya simply shrugged and continued.

“Isn’t that how man-and-woman relationships are? You’re a good guy, and you’re not dating anyone right now. I just happen to be an extremely good girl, and I’m also single. So if I suddenly jump at you out of the blue, you can’t say anything.”

“I think something’s wrong with your logic, but I’ll try to avoid being alone with you for now. I’m planning on enjoying my dates with monsters for a while more, so I have no plans on getting a girlfriend.”

“Hahahaha! You guys are too funny!”

Pepper clapped his hands as he laughed. However, I couldn't laugh along with him. It didn't look like Hwaya was joking at all. For now, I refused her jokingly.

I would have thought, ‘Why would Hwaya like me!?’ but I had already precedent with Loretta and Ye-Eun. Agh, damn, this was all because I was a Hero! Definitely! Maybe, monsters running rampant, global warming getting worse, wars continuing to rage across the globe, and lands cracking from droughts were all because I was a Hero!

A week after we came to Arizona, the wyverns had suddenly gotten stronger.

“Ah, I've seen this phenomenon before.”

“Oh, what a coincidence. Same here.”

After returning to the helicopter using ice steps, I thought about the wyverns I just killed. Wyverns used to die from a single Thunder Tempest, but now it took two or three of them to barely kill a wyvern. I murmured after drawing my breath.

“But still, they got too strong. They used to not be able to withstand your fire for long, Hwaya.”

“I heard that the stronger monsters get, the stronger the boss is. Ye-Eun, maybe...”

“I can’t fight the boss?”

“Maybe.”

Ye-Eun was exactly at the level of wyverns. Although she could manage to kill the strengthened wyverns, if the boss was stronger than we thought, we would need to pull her back from battle for her safety. We were here to hunt wyverns safely, not to risk our lives.

“But I want to help Shin...”

“Thank you for the sentiment.”

“T-Then will you give me a kiss?”

“No.”

“That was too fast...!”

The tension was high in the entire Antelope Canyon. Then, one ability user fought against a wyvern without properly assessing its strength, and died. Of course, as there was no one below S rank in this canyon, the one who died was also an S ranker. The canyon’s atmosphere became darker. Pepper couldn’t just laugh and enjoy

either.

Two days after the casualty appeared, a heavy rain poured down. As we couldn't stop just because of a rain, we got on our attack helicopter, which was completely fine under rain, and set out to hunt wyverns. Ludia had been feeling uneasy the entire day, and after the helicopter took off, she pulled on my sleeve and murmured.

“Shin, I'm feeling strangely uneasy.”

In truth, it was the perfect atmosphere to feel uneasy. Someone had died, wyverns had gotten stronger, and a heavy rain was pouring down today, so much so that it was hard to see in front of us.

I responded.

“Don't worry, the boss is going to appear for sure.”

“What does that mean!?”

“What do you mean what does that mean? Can't you see the powerful mana raging in the distance?”

Not long after I said that, the pilot screamed. From deep inside the canyon, a dragon-like wyvern twice as large as other wyverns came out. As I thought, it appeared today!

Then, Ye-Eun, who was likely also sensing the boss, suddenly raised her head.

[Shin, it's strange.]

[What's strange?]

[I don't know how to describe it... But there's something more.]

I frowned at her words. It was then that a giant dragon suddenly appeared in the air.

[An Event Raid has broken out! SS+ rank 100-man, 'Flame Drake.' Because you were at the location of the raid boss, you will be forced to participate!]

Chapter 132. Team Revival (6)

[Your party holds the priority for the Event Raid. Unless you want to reveal its existence, other dungeon explorers will not be notified until 1 hour later!]

“What? How can an Event Raid appear in a Field Dungeon!?”

“Event Raids don’t only appear when Event Dungeons are cleared! We must have met some sort of a condition!”

In the heavy rain, Hwaya’s voice reached me clearly. However, it wasn’t the answer I wanted to hear, since it meant there was nothing wrong with that monster being here.

Of the explorers on Earth, the only one that wasn’t here who could be of help was father. However, we were facing the boss monster of a SS+ rank 100-man raid. Should I prioritize running away? Or should I call father?

[Shin, make it public immediately! Sumire will come help!]

[Sumire!? She’s not stro—]

[She’s Gold ranked!]

Gold!? She couldn't climb 20 floors in 2 years, but she managed to climb over 30 floors in half a year!? That's... like me! What happened to her!?

I hesitated for a moment, but soon made the Event Raid public. Now that I thought about it, father would rather come and die than do nothing when his son was in such a dangerous situation.

Meanwhile, the drake landed on the ground, causing a tremor. It didn't have wings like wyverns, and its body was similar to the Giant Iron Boar that appeared in Guangzhou. It had beefy legs, and its front paws had razor-sharp claws. In addition, its front paws looked like they could reach dozens of meters in the air. The dense mana it emitted made it hard to breathe. It seemed stronger than most demons I met in the Luka continent.

“Turn the helicopter around.”

I shouted.

“We can't fight that guy on a helicopter!”

The pilot immediately turned the helicopter around. However, the drake seemed to have locked onto us already, as it opened its mouth and breathed fire directly at us. Although the heavy downpour made it hard to see, its giant orange flame wasn't weakened in the slightest and flew toward the helicopter like a laser.

“Tsk, I’ll go on ahead!”

Then, Hwaya clicked her tongue and jumped out of the helicopter. As she could fly with her ability, she could fight against the drake in the air. Although it might be okay if the drake focused on using magical attacks, if it used physical attacks, it would be hard for Hwaya to deal with it alone. It was why she stayed in the helicopter until now, safely shooting magic at wyverns.

As such, I prepared myself to also jump out. Looking back at Ye-Eun and Ludia, I spoke.

[That guy’s extremely strong. We can always run away to the dungeon if it gets dangerous, but there’s still a chance something might go wrong. I’m not going to force you, but...]

“That’s enough.”

“I’m confident I can run away if it gets dangerous!”

That’s what I thought they’d say. There was no way Ludia would leave me behind and escape, and Ye-Eun was almost addicted to hunting monsters after she got rid of her monsterphobia. The problem was that she was too careless with her life.

“I’ll say it clearly. You guys don’t need to risk your lives here. If it gets dangerous, I’m going to take you in my arms and use Return, got it?”

“Un!”

“Got it!”

Their eyes were sparkling for some reason. I hoped it wasn't because I said I'd take them in my arms! It wasn't the time to be so relaxed!

“Hu, okay. I'm going to go ahead, so come back after you return the helicopter. Talaria!”

I summoned Talaria and leaped into the air. Hwaya was blocking the drake's attack with her ability. On the tip of the fingers, a circular ring of fire rose up and absorbed all the fire the drake breathed out. It went without saying that it was thanks to her that our helicopter was still safe.

“Fight me, you lizard! You won't be able to even touch me with your flames!”

Standing confidently in midair, Hwaya shouted. Looking at her, I was reminded of the video on TV where she killed the wyvern that appeared in Busan. I thought she looked cool back then and envied her, but now I was fighting with her shoulder to shoulder. I couldn't be more deeply moved.

Hwaya ran out to fight the drake without hesitation, even after hearing it was SS+ ranked. She wasn't being reckless. It was because of her strong mentality, which did not let her fall back in

the face of her enemy. It was possible because she believed in herself to be one of the strongest on Earth, who did not allow defeat. Thinking how cool she was, I also thought I should take after her spirit.

To do that, there was something I needed to do.

“Get over here you god damned lizards. All of you come!”

[You mastered mid-rank Provoke! Your provocation seeps into your soul. You can now provoke deaf monsters!]

[You learned high-rank Provoke. Existences in the same area as you cannot escape your provocation. Weak monsters might die from having their spirits suppressed by your provocation.]

My provocation spread through the entire Field Dungeon without being hindered by the torrential rain. It even caught the attention of the ability users who were panicking from the sudden appearance of the Flame Drake and the wyvern boss. It had even calmed their confusion temporarily.

However, the ones I really wanted to call were the ordinary wyverns!

[Kiaaaaaak!]

[Kyaaaaaaaa!]

Countless wyverns as numerous as the raindrops falling down flew toward me! Seeing them, I was delighted. Damn, the world sure chose the wrong guy as the Hero. Why do I smile in such dangerous situations!?

Regardless, there was one important thing. For the first time since the demon's Army Commander, I was facing a formidable enemy. I couldn't worry about hiding my abilities. I had to go all out. Although I couldn't defeat the Army Commander without Peruta's help, I didn't think the enemy in front of me would make me do the same.

If I could do it with my own strength, I would do so. I could always call Peruta, but that was only as a last resort. If I continued to rely on my master, how could I surpass him?

I took out Gluttony Spear from my inventory. The moment I firmly gripped the spear shaft, I felt myself becoming more excited. I shouted.

“Peika, let's go full power!”

[Leave it to me, Master. I'm the strongest now!]

Strongest? The moment I knitted my brows, Gluttony Spear began to shine with a golden light. It was undoubtedly Spirit Aura, but it was much stronger than ever before. Why? The moment I

asked in my head, a bolt of lightning fell from the sky.

“Huk!”

[Mo... More!]

I was surprised for a second, thinking the lightning struck me, but that wasn't it. The lightning was completely absorbed by my spear and was clearly strengthening it. Not to mention, with all the storm clouds in the sky, I wouldn't be surprised if another...

BOOM! B-B-BOOM!

My ear deafened. Lightning struck my spear continuously. A few of them even missed their target and struck down incoming wyverns. I finally understood. Elementals were born from nature. They were existences always in line with nature and were greatly affected by nature. In this severe thunderstorm, Peika was at her strongest since the day we met.

“Peika, let's go!”

[Send them flying!]

The incoming wyverns stopped and flinched at the lightning. Meanwhile, I put them in my spear's trajectory. To be exact, it was just that they were in the way to the Flame Drake. It was why I gathered them in the first place.

Kicking off the air, I used Gale Track.

“Uooooooooooooh!”

Using the power of lightning, Peika’s Spirit Aura had enlarged the spear like I was using Sky God’s Rage. The moment my spear even touched the wyverns, they all exploded, and my spear grew stronger each time they died. It was because Gale Track increased my attack power by 5% each time I sent an enemy flying!

[Kugyaaaaa! Hero, I came for you!]

“I’m not into bestiality! If you want me, at least try to polymorph to a beautiful girl!”

17th. 18th, 19th...! I was approaching the drake. Since I was under super-armored state, nothing could stop me. 20th! 100% fully charged! Then, I flew past Hwaya. Seeing her widely opened eyes looking at me, I couldn’t help but think she was cute.

The drake opened its mouth after seeing me draw closer. Was he planning on swallowing me? I shouted.

“Ruyue!”

[Ask me anything!]

“Help me so that guy will obediently let me attack him!”

[If it's now, anything you want...!]

Then, I suddenly heard the sound of a machine gun. Pepper, who was controlling his helicopter from nearby, had fired at the drake! Imbued with his mana, the bullets seemed to be effective against the drake.

[Freezing!]

Ruyue took about 30% of my mana and casted an elemental magic. Although it was for a brief instant, I thought the world would freeze. In fact, our surrounding became completely frozen. The beams of light shining down became arrows of ice, the fire breathed out by the drake froze, and its entire body also frozen.

[The world is on my side now!]

So that was it! Usually, she created water from the water vapor in the air, but now, there was water everywhere around us. Even our enemy was completely soaked with water! Even if he was an SS+ ranked boss monster and had fire-attribute, Ruyue could freeze it. Both of my elementals could show their greatest strengths in this environment. I felt at least 50% stronger than my normal self.

The moment I realized it, I charged towards its mouth and pierced my spear through it.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kuaaaaang!]

Its frozen body instantly defrosted, while blood burst out from the top of its mouth like a fountain. Although the heavy rain would wash away the blood in time, the blood that splashed onto me made me feel uncomfortable. Thankfully, it wasn't poisonous.

[Herooooo! I'll eat you!]

"I already told you, no!"

I was now as free as a bird! After landing my attack perfectly, I flew back up. I didn't need to use Divine Speed, and as soon as I backed off, Hwaya quickly blocked the drake's flames. She was on fire today! Pun intended.

"Guys! Let me join in too!"

Pepper flew toward us, shooting down nearby wyverns with his helicopter. At the same time, the ground lightened up and a few people appeared. The dungeon explorer communication channel became noisy.

[Son, I came to help!]

[Unni, Hwawoo-nim! Minami Violet Sumire, reporting for duty!]

[Shit... I'm going to really die if I'm not careful...!]

Besides one, the reinforcing explorers couldn't be more reliable. I instantly thought, 'Walker might die if he's not careful...'

According to our contract, he had to come help us if we called him for Event Raids or Event Dungeons, but he came without Hwaya or me asking him. Because we thought this battle would be hard for Walker, we hadn't planned on calling him at all.

Perhaps, father had caught him and brought him along, but he could have escaped if he wanted to. I was happy that he came on his own accord. If possible, I hoped this raid would end without Walker getting hurt.

"Huhu. All the dungeon explorers on Earth are here."

Hwaya remarked as she flew next to me. I wasn't sure if she absorbed the drake's power, but she was emitting strong flames from her body. Since Ludia and Ye-Eun would soon return, she was right.

Looking at the drake still bleeding from its mouth, I snorted. It could be dangerous to think this way, but I didn't think I could lose to anyone now!

The moment after I thought that, a giant wyvern twice as big as

normal wyverns appeared in front of us.

Because of the drake, we had forgotten about it. It was the dungeon boss of the Wyvern's Nest.

Chapter 133. Team Revival (7)

[Hero.]

“So you can talk too.”

I was surprised, but I instinctively tightened my grip on the Gluttony Spear and aimed it towards it. To be honest, in the heavy thunderstorm, I thought even the boss of Wyvern’s Nest couldn’t be a match for me.

“Good. Thanks for coming, but sorry. I want to end it quickly.”

However, what it said next shocked me greatly.

[I know you have the ability of a Tamer, Hero. I want to become Hero’s subordinate.]

“You, what?”

I doubted my ears for an instant. What did this wyvern with the avian flu just say?

[After the drake appeared, I thought only death awaited me.]

“Aren’t you two on the same side?”

[Are you stupid, Hero? Between monsters, you either eat, share, or get eaten.]

Well, that's nice to know. Share probably refers to monsters from the same family or from the same kind. Although wyverns and the Flame Drake were seemed to both be species of dragons, it seemed they weren't allies.

[I've come to admire you after seeing you destroy dozens of wyverns with a single attack. Be happy. You forced the Queen of the Wyverns, Dark Wing Zirte, to surrender!]

I obtained two more useful information. The first was that this wyvern felt admiration at me killing dozens of her kind, and the second was that this wyvern was female. I was wondering why her voice was slightly high! Dark Wing Zirte then continued.

[Of course, what I want the most is to kill Hero and to obtain Hero's Light, but I know that is impossible. As such, I chose the second best option.]

“Since you can't kill me, you will serve under me?”

[And I will kill the drake.]

For a monster, she sure acted like a bully... Well, it didn't matter, since it was good for me.

The wyvern looked into my eyes. Meanwhile, Hwaya shouted.

“I don’t know what’s going on, but hurry up! That guy’s charging toward us!”

“Okay! Alright, good. You’ll probably be faster than Talaria.”

[From now on, I am Hero’s. Now, grant me a new name.]

“I can’t just call you Zirte?”

[I need a new name to tie myself to Hero.]

“Then let’s go with Lotte.”

[Good. My name is now Lotte! As the Hero’s partner, I will take after his brilliance!]

Immediately afterwards, several messages rang in my ear, as if they had been prepared beforehand.

[You made an achievement of taming the S+ rank boss monster, ‘Dark Wing Wyvern.’ You obtained 1 skill point. Current skill points: 4]

[Taming became level 3. You can tame your target more easily, and even the targets you placated temporarily will remain so for a longer time.]

[Spirit of the Tamer became level 3. You will win good first impressions, and the hostility and wariness against you decreases. Current tamable targets: 2/2]

Although Wyvern's Nest was a S rank dungeon, Lotte was S+ ranked. I wondered why, and suspected it was because she originally possessed a name.

Plene, for example, didn't have a name until I gave her one. On the other hand, Lotte had the name, Zirte. Just by looking at her wings and black skin, I could tell she was different than the other wyverns. She was called the Queen of the Wyverns and Dark Wing, both emphasizing that she was special.

That said, their goal should have been to kill me and take the world's power. It felt a bit weird that they gave up and joined my side because they weren't strong enough. I thought the command they received was absolute, something they had to prioritize over their own lives, but it seemed that wasn't the case. After all, Plene came over to my side rather easily, and it was the same for Lotte. Was it because I was a Tamer? Or was it just because I showed how domineering I was like Lotte said? Were their own lives more important than the command? Or was there something special about Plene and Lotte? For now, I had no way of knowing.

[Get on, Hero.]

“Right. Excuse me.”

[Mmm.]

“Can I let my comrades ride too?”

[That’s unpleasant. The only one I acknowledge is Hero, my master.]

She called herself my partner and Taming definitely worked, but it looked like it didn’t mean she would be completely obedient. With a bitter smile, I nodded.

“Alright, it can’t be helped then. Let’s go!”

[Don’t fall. Gryaaaaaa!]

Lotte opened her jaws and let out a scream. Then, she charged straight towards the drake. I raised my spear, and the constant lightning strikes from the sky strengthened Spirit Aura.

[Where did you get that!?!]

[If you want, you can try to entice one of the nearby wyverns!]

After replying to father’s message, I looked ahead. Although the connection between Lotte and me wasn’t as deep as my connection with Ruyue, as expected of Queen of the Wyverns, Lotte aptly dodged the drake’s flames and flew past its front paw.

In that instant, I used Elemental Blade and slashed its front paw. A strong explosion of lightning occurred upon impact, bursting the drake's scales and scorching its flesh.

[Kuaaaaaa! You bitch, you dare betray us!?!]

[It's better than becoming your dinner!]

The drake became enraged and stomped, causing the entire canyon to crack. Because of the falling boulders, people on the bottom of the canyon were busy running for their lives. Hoping that my companions were safe, I aimed my spear at it again.

[I will have you!]

The drake flashed its eyes and glared at me. At that moment, however, a flurry of bullets pierced through the top of its jaws. I was surprised from how accurate the shots were. From his helicopter, Pepper had accurately attacked the spot I struck earlier with my spear. I couldn't help but be amazed by his skill.

"T.K., you got yourself a cool mount! That spear too, how cool!"

Pepper flew next to Lotte, shouting with a loud voice that did not lose to the roaring monsters. With a grin, I retorted.

"Good shots, Pepper!"

“It wasn’t much!”

We wished each other luck and immediately separated. The drake’s flame laser shot through the air between us. Meanwhile, all the rankers resting at their lodging and the rankers that were scattered throughout the Field Dungeon were gathering. There were about 70 of them. However, even if more than one third of the world’s S rankers were here, I couldn’t confidently say they could defeat the drake.

[Come down, I’ll give you a Blessing!]

Ludia sent me a message. It seemed he had returned after landing the helicopter in the landing zone. I hesitated, but seeing Pepper’s helicopter move like a living creature and drawing the drake’s attention, I nodded. Ludia’s Blessing could not be ignored. It would be best to quickly go get it while Pepper was holding back the drake.

Lotte landed in the quagmire created by the heavy rain. Looking at Lotte’s large body, both Ludia and Ye-Eun were startled.

“I-It’s twice as big as a wyvern!”

“I’ve never seen a wyvern so big... How did you...?”

“I’ll explain later! Ludia, give me the Blessing!”

“Un! O Power vested in the earth, O Blessing! We shall fight to protect thee, lend us thy power! O Mitarus, bless and sublimate this power!”

[You received Mitarus' Warrior Blessing, strengthened by the power of the earth. For the duration, your health and mana recovery increases greatly, and your attack and defense increases by 20%. On defense, you have a chance to 'absolutely defend' your enemy's attack.]

I knew coming down was a good idea! After confirming that I received Ludia's Blessing, I told Lotte to fly up again. However, before Lotte could flap her wings, Ludia took off her hoody and exposed her face to the rain. Although she was wearing a mask, it couldn't protect her face from the rain.

“Shin, don't die, okay!?”

“Yeah. You be careful too.”

I lightly retorted with a grin. I wasn't sure if she could see my face clearly in the rain, but she looked like she was smiling too. Good, she was getting better.

Ye-Eun was charging at the drake with a dagger in each hand, and I also made Lotte fly toward the drake. It was then. The drake lightly stomped the ground, and a large fissure began to spread out. It was an earthquake attack.

[Son, let me get on too!]

[She says she doesn't want other people riding her!]

I descended down to the ground like an arrow as I messaged father. No matter how wide the canyon had expanded, it was still a canyon. If the ground began to fissure in the middle, it would be hard for anyone to escape. With Lotte's claws, I grabbed the people about to fall down into the abyss.

“Uaaaaaak!”

“Calm down, I'll drop you off in a safe area soon!”

I put them on top of the canyon. It was probably safer, and it would be easier for me to deal with the drake. Without listening to their thanks, I went off with Lotte again. However, after I spent some time saving people, the ordinary wyverns made me unable to focus on fighting the drake. They were attacking the rankers ferociously, as if to eat a last meal before the drake killed them.

“Can't you command the other wyverns?”

[Between monsters, you either...]

“Okay, okay!”

Lotte flapped her wings and raised her altitude. The weather was getting worse, as the sky rumbled and lightning sparked continuously. I raised my Gluttony Spear. Hearing Peika's excited shout, I couldn't help but smile.

“Lotte, we're going to use the skill that wiped out the wyverns earlier. The final target is obviously the drake.”

[Understood.]

“Alright, then... Uaaaaak! Everyone, come fight me!”

[You used Provoke! All enemies in this area bears deep hostility towards you!]

[Kiaaaaaak!]

[Kuaaaaaak!]

The wyverns changed their target from the ability users to me. They flapped their wings violently, as they cried. The drake also faced me and shot a laser straight toward me. The wyverns in the path was completely burned to death. As for me, Lotte dodged its attack with her quick movement.

“Good, Lotte. Well done.”

[Hmph. This much is nothing.]

“Then, let’s go! Gale Track!”

Because of the drake’s laser, it was hard to place twenty wyverns in the path of Gale Track. However, thinking back to the Gale Track Peruta used, I violently circulated Peruta Circuit and led Lotte.

“Huaaaaaap!”

First, second, third... Changing the trajectory naturally, I killed the fourth, then fifth...! The drake flashed its eyes and shouted.

[Volcano!]

‘What volcano? There’s no volcano here... Wait, there is!’

A scarlet flame erupted from the crack made from the earlier earthquake. Watching the S rankers trying their best to dodge or block it, I hurriedly called Ruyue.

“Can you freeze it?”

[No problem!]

When the lava shot toward Lotte and me, Ruyue instantly froze it. She could even freeze lava! We immediately broke through it. Eleventh, twelfth...! Shoot, the lava killed most of the wyverns!

[I'll fly straight to that bastard now!]

“Go! Ruyue, block that guy's attack!”

[Got it!]

Immediately after Ruyue nodded, the streaks of rain in front of us transformed into ice crystals and began to spin around Lotte's body. More and more ice crystals gathered around Lotte, and in the end, we looked like a whirlwind of ice crystals.

[With your strength, you won't be able to even scratch me!]

When the drake shouted, the earth tremored, and the raindrops that had fallen on his body burst out into all directions. How could a Flame Drake wield water!? I knew he had just used his boundless mana to send the water flying, but it was still enough to damage the S rankers. Furthermore, the attack continued, almost like Pepper's machine gun. Although I was fine thanks to Ruyue's ice crystal whirlwind, I urged Lotte on, thinking of the S rankers.

Then, the drake suddenly stopped moving. A black stream of blood burst out of its neck. At the same time, a voice filled with ominous mana rang out throughout the entire canyon.

“Ahaha, ahahahaha! This is fun, very fun! Uuuung, Earth is the greatest!”

... Wasn't that Ye-Eun's voice!?

Chapter 134. Team Revival (7)

I was shocked, but I wasn't shocked enough that I'd miss this valuable opportunity. Right now, the drake was almost completely defenseless! When we neared the drake, Ruyue first compressed the ice crystal whirlwind that was protecting us, and shot it toward the drake. Blood spurted out of its face, and even the blood soon froze.

[Kuaaaak!]

“I'll take an eye!”

Gale Track's final blow! I frantically circulated Peruta Circuit and added Gale Track's wind power to my lightning spear.

I pulled the spear back. The frozen blood on the drake couldn't defeat its hot blood and evaporated. At the same time, thrust my spear forward!

[Critical Hit!]

[Kiaaaaaa!]

“This is the power of the Skull Breaker!”

The moment the lightning spear stabbed through its left eye, tearing through the mana barrier protecting its body. At the same time that I realized a critical hit occurred, its eye exploded into pieces.

There was already a bonus for charge type attacks. With Skull Breaker's effect amplifying critical hit damage, not even a SS+ rank boss' eye was safe. Because of the unexpected effectiveness of the attack, I was once became wet with blood.

[Kuhuhu, as I thought, Hero is amazing!]

“Fly back for now! This bastard's going to thrash around again!”

“Kyahahahaha! Cool, you're so cool! Take me with you!”

When I was about to fly back with Lotte, someone suddenly jumped toward us from the drake's neck. It was Ye-Eun! Holding two daggers flashing with black aura, she easily landed on my back. Not paying attention to Lotte's struggle to throw her off, she rubbed my back (though it was covered by my armor) and asked.

“What's your name? Hm? Tell me.”

It was Ye-Eun's voice, but something felt different. If Ye-Eun talked like a middle-school girl, her voice currently exuded the charm of a mature woman. In fact, the way she looked at me as she peeked her head over my shoulders was unable to describe with words.

“You, you manifested in Ye-Eun.”

“Oh? You know my disciple? Huh? Mmm, I see. No. Can I have him?”

I felt like I could understand what she and Ye-Eun were talking about... I lightly pushed her face back and retorted.

“I’ll let it go since it’s an emergency situation, but you shouldn’t jump on someone else’s wyvern without permission.”

“What? Kyahaha, you’re funny! Mm, as I thought, I like you.”

[I’ll kill this woman.]

“Calm down, Lotte. Ah, dodge!”

As expected, the agitated drake swung its tail down at us. Lotte quickly dodged it, and the drake’s tail struck the ground, causing even more fissures to spread out. Furthermore, the drake’s body became redder, and a red steam-like gas was shooting out of its body.

“What is that?”

“What do you think that is? It means it got harder to jump on its neck and attack.”

Although the wyverns were mostly taken care of, it was still difficult for other rankers to fight the drake. The ground was fissured and lava was erupting out of it. The drake's body was on fire, and although a few long-ranged S rankers were attacking it, the red steam was blocking all of them. 'Blocking both close and long-ranged attacks... That's a cheat!'

[Is everyone safe!?!]

[I'm safe. That bastard's tail is as big as a Floor Master.]

[I'm safe too, Hwawoo-nim!]

[I'm... alive...!]

As Ludia wasn't in Earth's dungeon explorer communication channel, I sent her a separate message. She said she blocked the earthquake with her ability and was now focusing on supporting from the distance. There weren't many with healing abilities. As such, she would greatly increase the number of survivors.

"Kuha! The bullets just melt when they get near him!"

Pepper's helicopter flew near me. Although he said it with a refreshing smile, he didn't look too happy. It seemed his bullets couldn't pierce through the red steam either. However, after seeing Ye-Eun, Pepper exclaimed in a surprised voice.

“Mm!? Lady, you look the same, but you somehow look sexier! Did I fall in love?”

“Hahaha! As I thought, my appearance can’t hide my charm! But sorry, I already chose him.”

“Pepper, can you think of a way to attack?”

As an SS ranker, Pepper wouldn’t just give up with this. When I interrupted Pepper and Ye-Eun(?)’s small talk and asked, he grinned.

“I normally would have charged forward with my bazooka, but I think the water drops it shot out earlier broke something. The helicopter isn’t responding well! So, friend, I came to deliver my trump card!”

He threw something at me. When I received it and looked, it was a black metallic ball with a red button.

“It’s a fragmentation grenade specially created for me. Only S ranked or above monsters were used to make it, so you should be able to imagine its power! Since it can’t operate without my mana, there’s no safety pin or anything. Normally, if I put mana into it and press the button, it explodes in exactly 3 seconds, but...”

“You put all your mana in it, right?”

“Bingo!”

Although it looked simple, the mana I could feel inside it was no joke. In detail, all of an SS ranker's mana was in it.

“It's 3 seconds after you press that button, friend! I'll entrust you with it!”

“Damn, you cool guy... Leave it to me. I'll take care of it.”

“Good, then I'm going to go save the others. Let's go out for a drink afterwards, friend! Good luck!”

Pepper grinned and crossed his fingers over the pilot seat, then turned his helicopter around to go save the other ability users. Damn, that guy was just too cool... For now, I put the grenade in my embrace.

Then, the situation changed again.

[Hero! Hand over yourself to me!]

“Hero this, Hero that! You're noisy!”

When the drake shouted, once again erupting lava, Hwaya shouted back. In the next moment, the lava erupting from the ground shot toward her surprisingly. Startled, I was about to charge toward her, when Hwaya raised both of her hands.

“It’s my turn now! Army of Flames!”

Along with her hands’ movements, the lava flying toward her fell in clumps and began to take different forms. Eagle, hawk, crow... All kinds of birds known for their aggressive nature began to appear in thousands. The Animal Kingdom... No, it was the Army of Flames, Avian Edition! Because of the pouring rain, their bodies continued to sizzle and give off steam, but they didn’t shrink and continued to burn.

As if that wasn’t enough, the biggest clump of lava formed a giant wyvern. Hwaya got on its back and grinned toward me. Even in the rain, I could clearly see her smile. Ye-Eun’s voice then rang out from behind.

“Ptui, big breasted ones should all go to hell.”

‘Ye-Eun wasn’t even flat... I can see your past self...’ Although the thought crossed my mind, I thought she’d break my neck if I said it, so I kept it to myself.

After Hwaya turned all the erupting lava into her army, the rankers’ counterattack also began.

“Let’s group up! Magicians, please protect us with barriers!”

“Take at least one of its scale!”

“Protect our land! We will protect America!”

Most of the American ability users burned with determination to protect their home country, and other countries' ability users did the same as to not smudge their country's name. The ones who cared more for their lives probably left the battlefield already!

[Humans always like to gather in mass! They also always died in mass!]

The drake roared. The steam covering its body transformed to long and thin needles. It then shot them out like it had done earlier with the raindrops.

Immediately afterwards, Hwaya's Army of Flames blocked the steam arrows. The few that slipped through would have to be dealt with by the ability users.

BOOM!

A steam arrow flying toward them suddenly bounced back with a boom. I tilted my head, feeling like I've seen that ability before. Then, the protected ability users shouted in thanks.

"Dark Knight! It's Dark Knight!"

"Ooh, both Thunder Knight and Dark Knight are here!"

Father's identity was being revealed for the world to see.

[My flames prey on the sky itself!]

The drake's flames continued to get stronger. However, the atmosphere was different than before. The chaos created from the wyvern boss and the ordinary wyverns had settled down, and everyone was now focused on the drake.

[You insects squirming until death!]

“Kuuk! New daughter, please!”

“Yes!”

Ludia used her power of the earth and protected the ability users, while father was in front, shooting out shockwaves and blocking the drake's attacks. The attacks he could not completely block with his shockwaves were being blocked by Minami.

“Powered Guardian! Haap!”

Although father had blocked a portion of them, her defensive capability wasn't ordinary. However, the drake's steam arrow attacks seemed to be a disguise for its real attack, as its large tail slammed down on Minami. Although others managed to get away in time, Minami was... Kuk! When I began to charge toward her, Minami shouted.

“Aegis!”

I twitched my brows. Aegis? Wasn't that the shield of Athena...? Soon after the thought crossed my mind, the shield in her hand shone with a golden light. At the same time, I sensed a feeling I had grown used to by now. Although it wasn't my place to say that with my two god's true names, the Second Dungeon's Gold ranked Minami was... a genius!

“Minami obtained Athena's true name!”

“I don't know who Athena is, but she must be an amazing god. The feel great power from her!”

Ye-Eun's master nodded and remarked. While the two of us were talking, what was happening on the ground was a sight to behold. The moment the drake's tail collided with the Aegis in Minami's hand, the SS+ ranked raid boss' tail began to petrify. It was likely the effect of Medusa's head, said to be placed on Aegis. It was a bit weird that it petrified on contact rather than sight, but it was certainly effective.

[Kuaaaaa! You little bitch!]

Enraged, the drake swung its tail and broke the petrified part. Because of its resolute sacrifice, the petrification did not continue. Even so, a fourth of its tail shattered and blood spurted out from the wound like a fountain, dying the canyon red. With that, it should have heavily drained its strength and mana. Furthermore, it should now be impossible for it to attack with its tail! As

expected of a god's power...

“Let's go. The more agitated the enemy gets, the easier it is to stab a dagger in his enemy.”

“Okay.”

I was also thinking the same. When the SS+ ranked boss first appeared, it carried an overwhelming prestige, but now it was just a lizard with one of its eye and tail missing. Though, its magic power was still just as threatening.

[The rain! I'm drenched in rain!]

“C-Commence attack!”

Bolstered by father and Minami's success, some of the S rankers closed in on the drake and attacked. Although the difference in their strength was clear, the drake wasn't completely immune to their attacks. It was why the drake was thrashing about.

[The likes of you dare to approach me! Hero, give me the Hero!]

The steam covering its body freely transformed and swept out, still carrying its extreme heat. Few rankers who could not avoid it fell back with huge wounds. Seeing how it made S rankers retreat with such a simple attack, I grew tired of its strength.

“You! A mere lizard dares to covet a human!?”

Seeing the ability users he was fighting with falling back one by one, father gritted his teeth and pierced the drake’s foot with his spear imbued with shockwaves. Minami seemed to have lost Aegis’ power with the previous attack, but she still moved around quickly and protected the others from the drake’s attack. It was then that we came near.

“You’ll distract it, right?”

“I won’t just distract it. I’ll kill it.”

Ye-Eun’s master whispered in my ear, and I retorted lightly as I fixed my grip on my spear. Feeling the Peruta Circuit circulating violently, I glared at the drake. The rain and lightning pouring down strengthened me and weakened the drake. I didn’t matter that it was SS+ ranked or that it was a 100-man raid boss. I could be its opponent. That’s all that mattered.

“You’re really my style. Good, my name is Duca Eilie. Remember it well.”

“I’m Kang Shin. I don’t know if we’ll ever see each other again, though.”

“I can just ask my disciple! Next time, we should enjoy a heated night!”

With that, Duca jumped off Lotte's back. When the drake noticed us and raised its head, I shouted while drinking a highest-grade Mana Potion.

“Ruyue!”

[Crystal Rain!]

The rain pouring down became fiercer. The streaks of rain became ice arrows strengthened with elemental magic and shot toward the drake! The drake had opened its mouth to attack Duca, but was greeted by countless ice arrows. Not only its mouth, but its head, body, and tail were all attacked mercilessly. My mana was also drained mercilessly.

[Can I charge now, Hero?]

“Not yet...!”

Red steam waved from its body. It was to block Crystal Rain, but Duca was able to safely land because of it. The moment she landed on the drake, she struck down at the drake's neck with her two daggers, giving off a black aura. As she broke the scale on its neck one by one, she shouted excitedly.

“Kyahahaha! This is fun, fun!”

What a crazy woman... Kuhum. Anyways, now was the time!

[Grrraaaaaiiaaaaaa!]

As Lotte accelerated toward the drake, birds of flame also flew toward us from all directions. The birds collided with the drake's flames, preventing them from reaching us. How was Hwaya blocking an SS+ ranked boss' flame by herself? It was more than just impressive.

“Whew, that was fun! I'll leave the rest to you honey!”

On the other hand, after scratching off the drake's scales, Duca stabbed her daggers on its back and jumped down, holding the daggers in reverse and slicing down. Did she think that was a safe way to land? The black aura plucked off the drake's scales in a line, causing it to let out a bloodcurdling scream.

On the other hand, Lotte's accelerated more. Scarlet flame erupted out from the drake's body. It was as if its boundless magic power was going out of control. ‘I could hear nearby ability users screaming. Minami-ssi, protect them well! I will...!’

“Aim for its neck, where Duca stripped off its scales!”

[I'm going now!]

My surrounding distorted. The flame birds could not keep up with Lotte and fell behind. In an instant, we were at its neck. If we weren't this fast, the drake would have counterattacked us easily!

Without a shred of hesitation, I used Divine Speed and Heroic Strike. The white lightning spear, crazily accelerated by Divine Speed, pierced through its neck without resistance, widening the hole that was there. Good!

“Eat this!”

I took out the grenade Pepper gave me and pressed the button. Throwing the grenade inside the gaping hole, I pulled out my spear. Lotte quickly accelerated and flew back. Not even the Flame Drake withstand Pepper’s grenade filled with all of his power... Eh? Why wasn’t it exploding?

[Kuaaaa! You dare make a hole in my neck!? I must have you no matter the cost!]

“P-Pep...! Peppeeeeeeeer!”

You gave me a nonfunctioning grenade, you son of a bitch!!

Chapter 135. Team Revival (8)

At the unexpected situation, I was almost hit by the drake's fire breath. If Hwaya didn't send her birds to block the flames in time, I would have been seriously injured.

"Be careful, idiot! If you die, I'll drag you out of your grave and kill you again!"

"Thanks, Hwaya!"

I thanked Hwaya, but was still embarrassed and angered by Pepper's grenade. Even in the heavy rain, I could clearly see the hole in the drake's neck and the grenade buried in it.

It was amazing. What was amazing, you ask? It was that the grenade didn't explode even with the drake's fire erupting out just now. Those bastards went too far with the safety device!

"Leon Pepper, I swear I'll strangle you...!"

I gritted my teeth and raised my spear again, absorbing the surrounding lightning energy. Since the easy method was now gone, I could only use the more difficult method. Ugh, it would be fine for SS rankers like me and Hwaya, but S rankers might get hurt, which I wanted to avoid... Ah!

[Mega Rock Strike!]

The drake stomped the ground with both of its feet. Ability users panicked and scattered to avoid its attack, but then a sinkhole appeared in the ground, dragging a few of the ability users underground. Immediately afterwards, a huge rock shot up from the sinkhole.

“Save them! If they get stuck down there, there’s nothing we can do!”

“O Earth, give back the ones you swallowed!”

Ludia and other ability users scrambled to save the ones who fell into the sinkhole, but I was more concerned with the huge rock that was shooting up hundreds of meters up into the air by the drake’s magic power.

What did it shout just now? Although it didn’t explain what it did, I could tell what it planned to do by seeing the huge rock in the sky.

That drake was planning on dropping the rock and smashing the ability users!

Everyone was moving about in panic. Since I was the only one who could block it, I didn’t need to hesitate. I ordered Lotte to fly up. However, Lotte shook her head.

[We can’t block it! If we get hit, I might be fine, but Hero will die! That isn’t a normal rock!]

“Don’t worry. I don’t rush into things knowing I have zero chance of winning. I won’t die.”

Lotte sighed and began to ascend. Just in case, I activated Dragon Skin. With this, even if the method I thought of didn’t work, I wouldn’t die. Although my speed fell with Dragon Skin, Lotte’s speed was unaffected, as she soared up quickly.

It was then that the rock had reached its peak height, and began to fall. In truth, it was terrifying. Huge didn’t begin to describe how big it really was.

“Shin, no!”

At that time, Hwaya flew over, while riding a flame wyvern. She must have thought I was planning on committing suicide, as her face was pale. As if. I wasn’t remotely close to a martyr.

I asked Hwaya, who looked like she wanted to drag me away.

“Hwaya, can you slow that rock down from falling?”

“If I do, can you do something about it?”

“Of course. So, is it possible?”

“If it’s just slowing it down... Yes, a little.”

Hwaya took out a potion from her inventory and put it in her mouth. Then, she raised her hand. On it, a spherical white flame appeared. She looked back at me, while putting more power into the white flame. I could clearly see worry in her flame-like eyes.

“I only have enough mana to maintain the flame army, so you need to do the rest, okay?”

“Thanks Hwaya. You really are a cool woman.”

“Don’t say half-hearted words. I’d rather get a deep kiss.”

“You won’t even let me compliment you...?”

When I murmured, Hwaya smiled and threw the completed white flame at the rock. The moment the falling rock collided with Hwaya’s white flame, its surface became red, and the resistance slowed down the rock. Good! With this, it would be much easier for me to execute my plan!

“Hwaya, you can run now!”

Without waiting for Hwaya’s response, I flew higher with Lotte. Lightning flickered in the spear I held up, and Lotte seemed to be slightly terrified at the approaching rock. I couldn’t blame her. It was as big as an apartment building. Hundreds of people could stand on it without a problem.

The rock was falling. 100 meters, 70 meters, 35 meters, 10 meters! I thrust my spear forward.

“Outburst!”

The moment my spear collided with the rock, I felt that the spear overcame the rock’s crushing force. However, in order to protect the spear shaft, the spear transferred the crushing force directly to me. Along with an enormous shock in my arms, I felt an electrifying pain in my solar plexus. However, believing in Dragon Skin’s power, I gritted my teeth and continued to thrust my spear forward.

“You god damn lizard bastard! Eat this!”

The rock split, not from shock of colliding with the spear, but from an unnaturally strong shock. It split into dozens, then hundreds of pieces. Then, just as unnaturally, the broken pieces rained down in a straight line. Of course, their aim was...!

[Kuaaaaaa, Heroooo!]

If I recorded it, I could use it as an alarm clock! The rain of rocks struck the drake’s body. I didn’t think it would receive a fatal blow, but I clenched my fists, as I had prevented S rankers from dying in vain.

However, suddenly feeling raindrops in my head, I raised my hands to touch it, and saw that my helmet had been split into two.

It seemed that a piece of rock had glazed past my head. My mask would still hide my identity, but I would have to pay to repair the helmet. I gritted my teeth and put the two pieces of the helmet into my inventory.

The fight wasn't over yet. If I let the drake freely rampage any longer, my companions might really be in danger. Because of its attacks, the Antelope Canyon was already in a sorry state. The damage was even reaching outer perimeters of the canyon.

Hwaya's mana wasn't infinite, and she wouldn't be able to block its flames forever. Without her, I suspected that half of the people currently alive would be dead.

As such, I had to kill it before her mana ran out.

“Huu...!”

First, I resolved myself. Will one minute be enough? Will I be able to aim properly? Should I really do it?

No, with Ludia's buff, it should just barely be possible!

“Kuaaaaaaaa!”

[You used Orc Lord's Warcry! All party members are cleansed of negative status effects. All party members' attack power increases by 50 percent for the duration. All party members

become super-armored, unfazed by enemy attacks.]

Strength overflowed in my body. Of course, that wasn't it. Standing firmly on Lotte's back, I aimed my spear at the Flame Drake, currently swinging its front paw and breathing fire at the S rankers attacking it.

“Gigantic! Uk!”

[Kuk... It's heavy, Herooo!]

“Endure it just for a second, Lotte!”

The spear grew to dozens of meters in an instant! The spear had become incredibly heavy, and it was devouring an unimaginable amount of mana from Spirit Aura. I gritted my teeth and shouted.

“Sky God's Rage!”

The giant spear transformed into a lightning bolt. Oh, the spear became lighter! Plus, when I activated Sky God's Rage, thunderclaps rang out consecutively and bolts of lightning fell from the sky. My spear directly absorbed all of the lightning and became even bigger.

[Hahaha, [I feel super high, Master!](#)]

She literally says “high” in English. And Shin says “heavy” in

English.

“I feel super heavy!”

At Peika’s spirited shout, I clenched my teeth. The strength from all my muscles surged. Damn it, if I didn’t learn it as a skill, it would have been impossible for me to concentrate all my strength in this situation!

“Here I go... Heroic... Striiiiike!”

I flung the lightning bolt whole.

“Kuk! What is that giant lightning!?”

“Thunder Knight, it’s Thunder Knight’s power!”

“What... That’s the power of an SS ranker? It’s well above it!”

“Ah, the drake is moving! Stop it!”

[Kuaaaaa!]

In truth, the spear I threw wasn’t as fast as real lightning. The drake was quite dexterous for its size, so it could definitely dodge it.

That is, if I didn't do anything.

“Shadow Blink!”

The next moment, I was on the drake's neck. It erupted strong flames from its body and threw the ability users back, and was now trying to dodge the incoming spear. Of course, I had no plan of letting it do that.

I raised my whitened hand and struck down at its neck, shouting, “Ice Touch!”

[Your target freezes for 5 seconds. Afterwards, it can dispel the status effect depending on its resistance.]

[Kak!]

Like a lie, the drake froze in place. With a grin, I leaped off. Lotte flew like an arrow and caught me.

“Nice, Lotte.”

[I'm falling back!]

It seemed Lotte could feel the power behind Sky God's Rage. She flapped her wings quickly and flew off. Less than a second

afterwards, the spear I threw out pierced the drake's body.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kyaaaaaaaaa!]

“Wow, a critical hit.”

I watched, as I stood on Lotte's back. After glazing past the drake's neck, Sky God's Rage burned everything in its path and pierced the drake's body. Digging deep into it, it dyed the world golden for a moment, as formidable lightning struck its body.

At the same time, even the grenade that was stuck in its neck exploded! Right, if it could withstand Sky God's Rage, it would be an SSS rank boss monster, not a grenade! The shrapnel from the grenade shredded the drake's throat. Although it wasn't as strong as Sky God's Rage, with its positioning and the fact that all of Pepper's strength was imbued in it, it dealt critical damage.

[Kuaaaaaaaa...! The He...ro's... power...!]

The drake screamed. Its voice became quieter and quieter until no one could hear it. If it didn't die from this, I would have to resort to Deific Manifestation. When I was resolving myself to do so, the tension in my body disappeared. I had heard the voice I was waiting to hear.

[Event Raid success! Six of Earth's dungeon explorers and one independent dungeon explorer, a total of seven dungeon explorers has successfully completed an Event Raid! This great achievement increases the rewards greatly! As your average rank is lower than the raid boss, the reward increases again!]

[Your dignity is worthy of receiving the attentions of Transcendents. All gods that love battles and wars begin to observe you closely.]

The reward increased even more this time!? Plus, that message... It seemed I needed to prepare myself for what was to come.

[You obtained 5 stat points for completing the Event Raid.]

[Rewards will be distributed in order of contribution.]

[Kang Shin-nim's contribution is the highest. Choose your reward.]

1. Rage of Vulcan (Epic)
2. Bride of Ignis (Epic)
3. Executioners in Two Moon (Epic)

4. Elixir
5. Volcanic Lance (Epic)
6. Volcanic Guardian (Epic)
7. 5,000,000 Gold]

‘... Even the worst reward is 5,000,000 gold!? And the potion reward is [Elixir](#)!? If that’s what I think it is... isn’t it the miracle potion that restores someone to normal from all physical or mental injuries and status effects!? If the potion is Elixir, then what about the other rewards!? I mean, they’re all Epic!’

Not the elixirs as in strengthening elixirs, compressing elixirs, etc. The Korean word for that is completely different than this potion, which is literally “Elixir” phoneticized in Korean.

“S-Shin, did the rewards come out? It did, right? You’re the first in contribution, so how is it? Anything good?”

I was clearly first in contribution. It couldn’t be anyone else. Hwaya, who knew that fact well, approached me and asked with sparkling eyes.

When I looked at her, the water vapor evaporating from her was lessening. The heavy rain had passed.

Seeing the ray of light shining down from between the storm clouds, I said with a solemn expression.

“Hwaya... we struck it big.”

Chapter 136. Team Revival (10)

After that, everything was taken care of in a moment. Everyone's goal was to subjugate the Field Dungeon, Wyvern's Nest. Since I tamed the dungeon's boss, Dark Wing Lotte, their goal had been accomplished.

However, the Flame Drake, a raid boss, had suddenly appeared. Although no one had expected it, most ability users had joined the drake subjugation to protect their country and its honor.

Although they couldn't damage the drake much, I was very impressed by the fact that so many rankers joined forces in such a dangerous situation. If someone asked me if I could risk my life for my country's honor... I would undoubtedly say no.

In any case, with the drake now defeated, the Wyvern's Nest would become peaceful. Twenty four ability users had died. Although an equal number of people got injured, with a few S ranked healers and Ludia, the injured could easily recover.

Immediately after the drake died, its corpse strangely disappeared. All ability users became flustered and felt empty, but the one who was frustrated the most was America's Guardian. The corpse of the strongest monster ever known on Earth! Since they had lost it in vain, how couldn't they be angry!? I'd rather not describe the faces of the Guardian members who came running to the sight immediately.

If I had to truthfully discuss sharing the corpse, Team Revival

had the highest share. America did not have a say in it.

In truth, looking at American ability users' selflessness and their treatment toward other countries' ability users, I thought the American government would be like them, but it seemed all higher ups thought the same way. In any case, they would have to give worthy rewards to the ability users, who had risked their lives for America. The ability users gathered at the Antelope Canyon were too powerful and too many in number for them to pretend not to be blind.

Seeing the situation settle, I sent my party members a message.

[We can split it based on our contribution later.]

[Ah, Shin can have my share, as the guild application fee!]

[There is no fee though.]

[M-Me too. What's Shin is mine, and what's mine is Shin's anyways.]

[No, that's not right either. What's yours is yours, and what's mine is mine.]

[Mm... Son, do I have to give you my share for the guild application fee too? Plus, how come you didn't say anything to your father after getting a mansion!?!]

[Like I said, there is no application fee. Also, if I told you, you would have gone mad from jealousy, father.]

[Whatever! Shin isn't the type to take advantage of us, so we should be happy with the rewards! This dress is amazing!]

[Hmm... I feel bad taking 5,000,000 gold when I didn't do anything. Since I couldn't injure the drake at all, you can take my reward. If I accept it, I wouldn't be able to sleep at night.]

[Me too. I like this shield a lot... Hwawoo-nim, or rather, Shin-nim and unni was too amazing! You were really like mythological heroes!]

[I could say the same about you, Sumire! When did you get a god's true name!?!]

Leaving everyone to talk happily in the party communication channel, I opened my inventory. Then, I grinned with satisfaction.

Right. Within it was the complete corpse of the Flame Drake.

I had put it in my inventory when I had gone to retrieve my spear. With Divine Speed, it was a piece of cake! If I left it alone, America would grind their teeth to obtain it, and there was no reason for me to let that happen!

However, I had to show proper respect to the selfless rankers who died while fighting the Flame Drake. If I deemed that America treated them unjustly, I planned to reward their family even if I had to use up all my gold. That said, seeing how America had invited them so openly, I probably wouldn't need to worry about it.

For my reward, I chose Rage of Vulcan. I didn't need 5,000,000 gold or Elixir. I considered choosing Volcanic Lance, but I already had Crimson Gluttony Spear. As such, I decided to let father have the Volcanic Lance. In any case, I chose what looked like the best item.

Although I hoped that it was an accessory, Rage of Vulcan was an Epic grade sword. It seemed Spirit of the Collector didn't work properly this time. Disappointed, I disregarded its excellent effects or special skill, and just fed it to Gluttony Spear.

[Crimson Gluttony Spear absorbed Rage of Vulcan. Growth: 96%]

Eh!? Since it was at 87 percent before, it had gone up by 9 percent! It gave more percentages than the Demon Army Commander's weapon, even though they were both Epic grade...! With this, it wouldn't be long until Crimson Gluttony Spear's growth would reach 100%! Thinking about it made my heart beat. If it was already so strong, how much stronger would it be when it evolved? If I thought about all the weapons it ate, it was only obvious that I would look forward to it so much.

Once I chose my reward, obtained the drake's corpse, and took care of all the ability users' recovery and evacuation, I wanted to go home. Walker, father, and Sumire had already returned. Only me, Ye-Eun, Ludia, and Hwaya remained. Although we considered going back using Return, I decided to see Pepper before we left.

I grabbed him by his collar immediately.

"You bastard, I almost died because you gave me a dysfunctional grenade!"

"Kek, it's not my fault! It was fine when the grenade was outside, but because the inside of its body had high mana resistance, I couldn't detonate it with my mana alone!"

"You should have said that earlier, you bastard!"

"I didn't know you'd drill a hole in its neck and put the grenade in it! Uaaak, the sky is shaking, T.K.!"

After shaking Pepper for about 5 minutes to vent, I let him go and said my goodbye. Although I strangled him just a moment ago, Pepper seemed reluctant to part with me.

"You, Miss Mastiford, the dagger girl, and the priestess girl. It's a shame that I have to say my goodbye."

“We’ll meet again one day.”

“Hahaha! If a monster as horrible as this one appears in America, you’ll be the first one I look for, T.K.! Take good care of me then, too!”

“Why are you only thinking of making me work. You better prepare a hefty reward.”

“I’m sure the government will take care of that! Just like this time! Hahaha!”

Seeing Pepper’s happy smile, I made a bitter smile. It was impossible to dislike a guy like this.

That said, there weren’t only pleasant farewells. When I was cleaning the room I stayed in, I heard a knock on the door. When I thoughtlessly said to enter, a girl entered along with six men in suits.

It was Ciara Kenex.

“Can you hear it, Hero-nim?”

With her eyes closed, she raised her hand and pointed outside the window.

“Everyone is praising Hero-nim. They are touched by Hero-nim’s

accomplishment of defeating such a large monster practically alone.”

“It wasn’t just me. It would have been impossible without everyone’s help.”

“That is precisely the reason that Hero-nim must lead them. This is the best opportunity!”

I thought she’d bring it up again. With a sigh, I turned to face her, and continued.

“I’m going to say this without a shred of falsehood. I was genuinely impressed by the ability users’ attitude. They risked their lives for their country and that should be respected.”

“Hero-nim...!”

“But even without them, we would have defeated the drake.”

I said concisely.

“They lost their lives in vain. They died for nothing! They should have shined elsewhere. Not by fighting an SS+ rank beast like the drake, but by fighting monsters that B or A ranked ability users couldn’t fight. They should have protected people that way. They shouldn’t have thrown away their lives here!”

“But without them, who would have defeated the drake!?”

“Don’t kid. If you knew something like this would happen... you should have known... You should have known that they wouldn’t have been able to even scratch the drake.”

The moment the words left my mouth, a thought suddenly crossed my mind. If that was true, then... this child...

“... You knew, right? That the drake would appear. You said it yourself, that you knew when monsters would appear. You called me here at this time for this reason, right?”

“...”

“And you knew. You knew that my companions and I would have been able to defeat the drake by ourselves.”

“I...”

Even though she couldn’t see, she turned away, as if to dodge my gaze. Seeing it, I couldn’t help my voice from rising in anger.

“You, did you stay quiet because you wanted to see other ability users praising me? You let them die for something like that? To let other rankers know of my strength? Twenty four S rankers died because of it. Twenty four precious lives disappeared!”

“But their abilities will be retrieved by me, and I can allocate them to next appropriate people! Although they died, as a result, Hero-nim obtained an absolute authority among the Awakened. I think this is a great reward beyond compare!”

For a moment, my head became blank. I couldn't think of anything. It almost felt like I received a mental attack.

If I raised my hand and lightly punched her, she would undoubtedly die. With the rage boiling inside me, it would be especially hard for me to control my strength. When I raised my hand, the men in suits moved to protect her. When I put it back down and glared at them, they froze in place.

Trying to control my anger, I continued.

“You should have told everyone the truth. You should have evacuated all ability users, and let my party members and I take care of the drake.”

“Hero-nim, in that case, Hero-nim's accomplishment won't be properly evaluated! The reaction would be entirely different than what it is currently! In fact, people might have called it a scam!”

“Not being properly evaluated or it being thought of as a scam is fine! In fact, we should have called other SS rankers and fought the drake together! That should have been the original function of your ability!”

“Hero-nim!”

I felt something in my head being severed.

“Screw off. Right now, all of you... SCREW OFF!”

[You obtained the passive skill, Overwhelm. This skill appears with extremely low chance among people with high magic and charm stats. Just by possessing this skill, you decrease the stats of all opponents by percentages, regardless of whether they are stronger or weaker than you. At level 1, it decreases all opponents' stats by 5%. The chance of your opponent failing to activate a skill increases by 5%.]

I didn't hear any response. The door closed silently. I slammed my fist down on the table, and the table instantly turned into dust.

I couldn't face the approaching despair with numbers. I felt it in the Luka continent. Absolute strength. An absolute strength was needed, one that would not kneel in face of fear. Although number was important, it wasn't enough against an enemy like the Demon Lord.

It would be different than the wars as Earth's history would show.

Military strength would decrease the longer the fight went on. It

was also our most critical weakness. Why? Because monsters and dungeons were appearing even now, and there wasn't an end in sight! If people died, could we replace them? No, humans weren't objects or weapons!

This wasn't something like a war. It was an infinite competition for survival!

And what we needed wasn't number, being consumed endlessly and heading to destruction. It was a select few with immortal strength, a Hero who would stand tall against all odds and would defeat all enemies!

I had no plan of saying that only I could do it. I had no plan of saying that anyone with the strength should do it. In fact, if someone forced me to fulfill the role, I would reject it with great displeasure. If someone like Brightman said he'd fulfill the role, I wouldn't even believe him.

However, we needed to become stronger to protect the place we could stand.

Before we all descend to a bottomless pit with nowhere to stand.

Chapter 137. The Third Explorer (1)

Using Return, we left the Antelope Canyon without anyone knowing. With what happened in Britain, people surmised that Thunder Knight and the Flame Witch had an ally that could use mass teleportation.

What was more troubling was that even in all the chaos, someone filmed us fighting the Flame Drake and spread it for the world to see. Perhaps... No, I was certain. It had to be Ciara Kenex's work.

All I did was to fight the drake on a black winged wyvern, so why were all the channels on TV talking about Thunder Knight? In fact, because I defeated the drake on a wyvern, my name had changed from Thunder Knight to Dragon Knight.

All countries focused on Dragon Knight's identity and were shocked by Dragon Knight's strength. The fact that I was the strongest ability user seemed to be going around like an undeniable truth.

To be honest, it was very troubling. It really felt like it wouldn't be weird if an organization was made. Thinking about how more troubling things would become if my identity became known, I vowed to hide myself more thoroughly.

My father, of course, looked at me with envy. He was the world's greatest in terms of being unable to act his age.

“Kuu, I'm going to obtain a god's true name too, son!”

“Go ahead. Do you want a hint? I told you before, right?”

“I could have missed something! Repeat it for me!”

I doubted hearing it for the second or third time would help, but when I explained all the circumstances where I obtained a god's true name, father let out air through his nose and ran to the dungeon. Didn't you say you were trying to make a breakthrough in your spearmanship? What happened to that, father?

In addition, with this incident, mother had found out about Ye-Eun and Hwaya as well. Although Yua already knew about Ye-Eun and Hwaya, when she saw them on TV, she seemed even angrier.

As Ludia lived a disciplined life, she fell asleep at 10, and at the latest, 11. After she started climbing the dungeon, she stopped clinging onto me 24/7. Now, she only held me until she fell asleep and shouted my name when she woke up, so I was quite free from... Eh? Why did I feel like nothing changed?

In any case, with Ludia asleep, I was being interrogated by mother and Yua.

“So son, of the three of them, who's the real one?”

“None. They're all friends. Just friends.”

“Don’t they smack you every time you say that?”

How did she know!? When I opened my eyes widely, Yua let out a deep sigh, while mother laughed hysterically.

“Ahaha, that’s so funny! I thought my son would die without ever dating a girl. When did he get so skilled? Not to mention, they’re all so beautiful. Ehew, you’re going to make my mouth rip from smiling too much.”

“Why is Mom so happy? I won’t give oppa to women like them. Never!”

Yua shouted, then stomped up the stairs to her room. I was confused, but mother chuckled and spoke.

“It’s about time Yua graduated from her oppa too. I’m happy that you guys have such good relationship, but it’s too much to be honest. You should really settle on one quickly. I won’t say anything if you get married to Ludia now. To be honest, she’s the most fair. Her personality too... Other than the fact that she relies on you a bit too much, she’s kind. Although she can’t cook yet, she’s good at cleaning and doing the laundry.”

It felt weird hearing someone say that Ludia was kind. Well, since mother only met Ludia recently, it wasn’t... Wait, what? Marrying Ludia? I sweated and explained to her.

“Mom, I’m only 21 now. What do you mean settle down... And

Ludia? Not Palludia?”

“That’s what she asked me to call her. Isn’t it nice? It’s more friendly! Ah, that’s not what’s important! You shouldn’t feign ignorance when a girl is openly telling you her feelings. That’s the best way of getting hated!”

“I properly declined them!”

“What? Declined? Ehew, you don’t know how lucky you are. Ah, wait!”

I forcefully ended the interrogation.

If Dark Wing Lotte was living anywhere near our house, my identity would be revealed to the whole world in a moment. As such, I moved her to the dungeon. Instead of the cramped mansion (there was a new resident in the garden named Flame Drake), she was in a better place. It was Resting Place of the Angels.

[Wow, it’s Shin!]

The moment I arrived, Plene noticed me instantly and ran to my embrace. As it happened every time I met Plene, I had somewhat gotten used to her the softness of her body. Though, it was a lie... I mean, Plene’s attire was too light!

[Are you sleeping? What do you want to eat? Should I catch you a fish?]

[Like her name suggested](#), Plene shaped her eyes like stars and looked at me, making it hard for me to decline. However, I first asked her about the new resident.

Her name comes from Planetarium!! I finally found out this chapter. That said, I'll still stick with Plene since that sounds like (P-Leh-Neh), while Plane (sounds like plane as in airplane).

“Where’s Lotte?”

[I don’t know. She hates me. She keeps flying around.]

“Hmm.”

Plene took the chance to complain about Lotte as she clung to me. Thinking the way Plene liked to cling was exactly the reason why Lotte didn’t like her, I waited for Lotte to come. As I thought, it seemed Lotte could sense my presence too, as she soon flew down and landed with her wings folded. She was big no matter how many times I saw her.

[Are we going somewhere to fight, Hero?]

“No, you can rest a bit more. You too, Plene. When dungeons start appearing on Earth, you’ll both get busy.”

[I’ve been expecting it ever since I joined Hero’s side. Once we killed that drake, it became too late to turn back. I will follow Hero.]

[Mmm, I like Shin, so I'll protect the people Shin likes! Monsters are bad, so I'll beat them up!]

Lotte then looked down at Plene and snorted.

[You are also a monster. I can't believe what you're saying, just because you fell heads over heels for a man.]

[Eeeek! But you like Shin too!]

[I only kneeled at the difference in our strength. Since I swore I would follow him, I would continue to do so, but that is it.]

[Liar, liar! You like Shin too! Loretta said Taming won't work if you don't like Shin!]

[You biiiiitch!]

If they really fought, Plene would easily lose, so I had to protect her as I calmed Lotte down.

“Guys, don't fight and train your abilities. Please.”

[Okay! Got it!]

[Tsk... If it's Hero's request, there's no choice.]

When I patted their heads, Plene was openly happy, while Lotte smacked her tail on the ground strangely. At least, it seemed she didn't hate it.

Now that I was done with checking out how things were in the Resting Place of the Angels, I had to return to my everyday schedule. Of course, that only meant one thing for me.

It was dungeon exploring!

... For the record, there was a very simple reason that I didn't bring Lotte and Plene along to explore the dungeon. For Plene, monsters on the ordinary floors weren't strong enough for me to need her, and monsters that were strong could resist Plene's ability easily.

Simply put, Plene was still too weak. Thankfully, it seemed she was content with just singing in Resting Place of the Angels. Although she was continuously growing her ability, she was still too weak to bring to real fights. That said, I suspected that I'd need to borrow her ability soon on Earth.

As for Lotte, I tried to bring her along once, but she was too big to freely fly in the dungeon. It was quite unfortunate. As such, I had to break through the 51st floor on Ruyue's back.

Before then, however, I wanted an answer from Loretta.

“Yes, Shin-nim. There’s... 20 years left.”

“For what?”

At Loretta’s response, I asked her again naturally. With a face on the verge of crying, she answered.

“Until Earth’s protective barrier disappears and all monsters realize that Shin-nim is the monster.”

“There’s 20 years... until then?”

“Yes.”

‘Wait... Hold on.’ I put my hand on my forehead.

Wait, what? 20 years? When I asked Loretta about it before, why did she use an expression like ‘a little while longer’? Don’t tell me she’s joking right now? No, but she looks like she’s about to cry!

“Is it really 20 years?”

“Yes. There’s only 20 years left... I’m sorry. This is why I didn’t want to tell you...”

“Loretta, how old are you this year?”

“Yes, I’m two thou... Kyak! Rude, how rude! Why are you asking me that so naturally? I almost answered you!”

“Huk!”

Loretta screamed. The punch she sent out glazed past my nose. What? Two thousand...!? This elf that looked younger than me was at least two thousand years old!? Of course, I couldn’t ignore the digits that followed. But, I see... With that, I understood.

No matter how much medical science had advanced, humans currently could not live past the age of 150. Although 20 years were long for humans, for Loretta who lived for over 2 thousand years, 20 years could be relatively short.

In any case, now that I knew, strength left my body. I fell on the ground in panic, and Loretta sat down next to me. She sobbed for a bit, and after seeing that I had fallen down, she blinked her eyes and looked at me.

‘Sh, Shin-nim? Did my punch hit you? Oh no, it must have hurt a lot!”

“If you think it’ll hurt a lot, don’t swing your fist around... And don’t worry, I wasn’t hit. I was just... relieved.”

“Eh? Relieved?”

Loretta tilted her head adorably.

“How can you be relieved, hearing that there’s only 20 years left?”

“Well, if I have 20 years, I should be able to reach the end of this dungeon. No, I will do so for sure.”

“... ”

Finding Loretta’s stupefied expression cute, I laughed again. However, hearing my laughter, Loretta let out a dry cough and spoke with a stern expression.

“Shin-nim, this dungeon was here before I was even born. Back then, although the method of climbing was a bit different, the difficulty wasn’t too different.”

“You mean two thou...”

Something flashed before my eyes and a deep hole appeared in the dungeon’s wall. Even my Heroic Strike could only leave a tiny gap in the wall!

Loretta smiled sweetly, and I forced myself to smile back.

“What did you say, Shin-nim?”

“1, 17 years ago maybe? Was that when the dungeon was

created?”

I answered as I sweated. Loretta looked satisfied at my answer.

“Huhu, the dungeon was created long before I was born. In any case, many people challenged the dungeon during this time, but only three people managed to reach its end.”

“But Ellos said no one had succeeded... Though, Loretta would know more about it.”

“Huhu, he’s also right. After the dungeon changed to the method it now has, no one has managed to conquer the dungeon. To be honest, the past method was much easier and lax. Because of that, there were errors between achievements and the blessings given out, causing more worlds to... No, never mind. There’s no need to think about it.”

‘I can hear you perfectly, though...’ I grinned, and Loretta also grinned. However, she was back to her stern expression in the next moment.

“The dungeon is strict. It is not a place that wantonly gives out strength to people. Shin-nim, are you saying you will conquer the dungeon in only 20 years?”

“yes.”

“In that case, there’s something else Shin-nim should know.”

‘What is it?’ When I tilted my head and asked, Loretta spoke with a stiff voice.

“Does Shin-nim... still think that First Dungeon is the most difficult dungeon?”

Author’s note:

ICDS will continue for the next 20 years! (Lies)

If things will be peaceful for 20 years, I wouldn’t have brought up the Hero so early on, right? ^^

Look forward to the future development, everyone!

Chapter 138. The Third Explorer (2)

I paused at her question, then grabbed her shoulders and shouted.

“So there really is one? I knew it!”

“Kyak! Sh, Shin-nim, it’s still day time... N-Not that I hate it. In fact, you’re free to go ahead.”

“Nevermind that!”

“That!? Did you just consider my okay sign as something petty!?”

“Loretta, is there a Dungeon higher than the First Dungeon?”

Loretta grumbled and answered.

“There is. Only administrative guild masters like myself or explorers that have gone there know about it.”

“What are the conditions?”

“Before that, are you prepared? That dungeon certainly has higher rewards than all other dungeons, but the price you have to pay is equally high. Shin-nim might even regret going there. Just climbing the First Dungeon might be better. I’m certain. Do you still want to listen?”

I became quiet at her words. Then, I somewhat realized why she brought it up in the first place. Thus, I asked.

“If I conquer the First Dungeon, will I be able to defeat the world’s enemy?”

“...”

I asked again.

“What if I clear the higher dungeon?”

“If you can completely clear it... probably.”

“Then isn’t the answer obvious?”

“... Right. Really, Shin-nim is...”

“I’m what?”

“No, nothing. Nothing at all.”

Loretta shook her heads at my question. The corners of her mouth was curled up to a smile, unlike before. At her extremely pleasant smile, I also smiled.

“Okay. If it doesn’t work, I’ll bring you back to the First Dungeon even if I have to threaten the Lord!”

“It’s fine. I’ll break through it with my strength.”

“Okay, then I’ll teach you how to get to ‘Beyond.’”

“Beyond?”

“Yes. It is somewhere only First Dungeon explorers can hope to reach. Even amongst them, only those with the greatest abilities, potential, and qualifications can enter it. As the reason for its existence is different than the other dungeons, it is called Beyond.”

First condition. Being a First Dungeon explorer.

Second condition. Defeating all bosses one versus one.

Third condition. Obtaining a god’s true name.

Fourth condition. Being acknowledged by an administrative guild master.

Fifth condition. Being above Gold rank.

Sixth condition. Making achievements.

It was truly a path of blood and iron. However, I had already completed most of them. Loretta telling me about Beyond signified that she acknowledged me, so there was only one left for me to fulfill.

“Is the sixth condition what I think it is? Like the achievements I’ve been making so far?”

“Yes. It hasn’t been revealed how many achievements you need to make, so I can’t tell you when you’ll be able to enter Beyond. As such, Shin-nim has to focus on making achievements. Since you decided to climb Beyond, it’s better to go as soon as possible. Just like its name suggests, Beyond is a dungeon that lies past the First Dungeon. Every time you clear a floor on the First Dungeon, you’ll be able to challenge Beyond. When you clear a floor in Beyond, you’ll return to the First Dungeon.”

“In other worlds, I’ll be able to climb more in Beyond the lower my level is.”

“Exactly. Of course, since no one has succeeded in conquering the First Dungeon, it’s too early to worry about this, but Shin-nim really gives people hope.”

For example, if the First Dungeon had 100 floors in total and I became a Beyond explorer after clearing the First Dungeon’s 75th floor, then once I cleared Beyond’s 1st floor, I would have to return to clear the First Dungeon’s 76th floor. Once I cleared it, I would be able to challenge Beyond’s 2nd floor. In that case, when I cleared the 100th floor of the First Dungeon, I would be able to challenge the 26th floor of Beyond. But that would be it. I wouldn’t be able to

challenge Beyond's 27th floor even if I cleared the 26th. I wouldn't be able to conquer Beyond, being able to only conquer the First Dungeon.

Even if the First Dungeon didn't end at the 100th floor, it was clear that becoming a Beyond explorer later was disadvantageous.

How unreasonable!

"Because no one has reached the end of Beyond, no one knows how many floors Beyond has. So don't worry about it too much and focus on the First Dungeon. If it's Shin-nim, I believe Shin-nim will be able to enter Beyond before the 70th floor!"

"I hope that's the case. Then, see you later."

As Loretta advised me with a big smile, I also answered with a smile. Then, I left for the 51st floor, vowing to myself that I would one day reach beyond the First Dungeon.

[You became level 52. You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[You obtained the qualification to go beyond the First Dungeon.]

[Would you like to become an explorer of 'Beyond'? The moment you accept, you will be removed from the dungeon's ranking.]

[Please choose carefully. This place is entirely different than the First Dungeon, and those that pass this threshold may not go back.]

“...”

On the 51st Floor Shop, I looked at Loretta. She looked back and smiled sweetly.

“What’s wrong, Shin-nim? You were fast today, too! To think you’d break through the 51st floor, which is full of trolls, in just 5 hours!”

“Um... Loretta.”

“Yes, Shin-nim!”

“It looks like I got the qualification to go to Beyond.”

“...What!?”

I must say, Loretta’s surprised expression was extremely cute.

[You became a Beyond explorer! You can challenge Beyond’s 1st floor. Once cleared, you can challenge the First Dungeon’s

52nd floor and you cannot immediately challenge Beyond's 2nd floor.]

[You made an achievement of becoming the fastest to enter Beyond since the dungeon's founding! You obtained 4 skill points. Current skill points: 8]

[You became the current Beyond's third explorer. You are currently ranked 3rd in Beyond. Beyond's explorer communication channel has been opened.]

[The residence and resort in your possession has changed their affiliation to Beyond.]

After listening to the messages in a daze, I looked at Loretta, who was also in a daze.

“Loretta, what happened?”

“Mmm... I don't know!”

Loretta was too cheerful. When I sighed, she became startled and began to contemplate the matter seriously. She then came up with an answer.

“I think what Shin-nim did in another world as a Dimensional Mercenary, then defeating the drake that appeared on Earth had significant impact.”

“Those two were acknowledged as great achievements?”

“Yes! But you really are amazing. Fastest to become a Dimensional Mercenary, fastest to become a Beyond explorer... If it's you, you might really do it.”

“Don't flatter me too much.”

“Huhu. You don't know what I'm talking about yet.”

Loretta rejoiced with her hands together, but I was slightly scared at her eyes that seemed to be looking somewhere far away. Would she tell me if I asked? Or would she tell me to wait again? Suddenly feeling my heart tighten, I turned away. Startled, Loretta grabbed my sleeves.

“Shin-nim, what's wrong?”

“What do you mean? I have to go to Beyond now.”

“Ah, right... You surprised me, geez... Really. Don't disappear without saying anything! You have to properly say you'll be back!”

Loretta flapped her ears quickly as if she was angry. I was relieved. She was properly looking at me now.

“Then, I'll be back.”

“Eit!”

Loretta tried to kiss me habitually, but as I was expecting it this time, I easily dodged to the side. Then...

[You received Queen Elf’s Blessing. For the next 5 hours, you receive the following effects: You are protected against all low-rank and mid-rank status effects. You can maintain your consciousness for 5 minutes after falling in half-dead state. Your luck increases by 100. All members of the Faerie race will see you favorably.]

“Eh? Didn’t I dodge it just now?”

“T-That’s...”

Seeing Loretta dodged my eyes as if something pricked at her conscience, I realized. It seemed these blessings didn’t need to be applied with kisses. Loretta had always used Blessings under the guise of kissing, and when I dodged her this time, she failed to kiss me, but the blessing had gone through.

Dumbfounded, I murmured.

“You really kissed me just because you wanted to?”

“I, I already told you. I’m kissing you because I love you...”

Even as she said that, she seemed embarrassed as she tried to cover her face with her ears. Of course, even with her long ears, it wasn’t possible. This person, or rather, this elf... why was she so cute? Feeling the sense of unease I just felt disappearing, I reached my hand out to pat her head.

“Eh?”

“Mm, well, I appreciate it. It’s just that I don’t know what’s what. To be honest, my head is already full because of the dungeon and the matter with being a Hero. Sorry. You don’t have to wait for me, so...”

“S-Stupid. I’m extremely used to waiting! Even if I don’t want to!”

For some reason, she called me stupid.

“R-Really?”

“Really! So don’t worry about something like that, and go!”

Just like that, Loretta chased me away. I didn’t understand what just happened.

Since thinking about it wouldn’t help, I tilted my head.

In the place where the stairway to the 52nd floor should be, a grey gate had appeared. Without much thought, I jumped into it.

[Commencing exploration of Beyond's 1st floor. You cannot stop exploring Beyond whenever you want. To give up and leave, your vitality must hit zero and you must be forced out to your home in the residential area or your world. You need one month to re-commence exploration, and you cannot climb the First Dungeon during this time.]

‘Loretta, before trying to kiss me, you should have told me about this! Though, even if you did, I would have gone anyways... But this means I won't be able to go back to Earth until I clear Beyond's 1st floor!’

In any case, the first impression of Beyond I had was that it was quite big. Also, its structure was a bit different than the dungeon floors I've climbed so far.

“Is it a maze?”

There were hard brick walls to my left and right. When I tried to attack it with my spear imbued with mana, it didn't budge in the slightest. In fact, the red bricks absorbed my mana and reflected it back to me. I could read the mana's movements and avoid the attack, but it was stronger than my original attack. It seemed the walls had strengthened my attack before reflecting it back. I would have to keep this in mind as I went on.

“Kuaaaaaang!”

Then, I suddenly heard a rather familiar roar. ‘Strange... I definitely heard this roar before!’ I tilted my head and walked forward. If I didn’t, nothing would get done.

“Kuaaaaaang!”

‘Hm, the sound is closer.’

The fact that I couldn’t break the walls down stressed me greatly. On the other hand, I thought that this dungeon was more true to its role than the dungeon I’ve climbed until now.

Slowly, I approached the source of the roar. As I walked, my increased intelligence clearly drew the maze’s map in my head. As I understood the maze’s structure little by little, I understood how far I would need to walk to meet the source of the roar.

“Kuaaang!”

“Eh?”

‘This... is a bit different than the other voice.’ I suddenly felt a chill down my back. Feeling uneasy, I immediately took out Gluttony Spear. Then, with one hand on the right wall, I slowly walked forward. I was certain. The source of the roar was up

ahead.

As I thought, when the wall came to an end, a large open area appeared. It was spacious enough for the Flame Drake to lie down.

There, I found them.

“Orc Lord?”

My god, how long had it been!? Orc Lord, it was an Orc Lord! The one that had helped me become a proper dungeon explorer! Glad to see him again, I raised my voice and ‘they’ looked back at me. Their eyes were bright red.

“There are... many Orc Lords?”

I found the source of the chill I felt. My god, there was a small conference being held here! But let’s think carefully. Orc Lords were bosses from the 5th floor. No matter how fancy their armors were or how much they exuded imposing auras, they shouldn’t be able to win against me, who was level 52...

“Kuaaaang!”

“Kuaaaaang!”

“Kuaaaaaaang”

[Orc Lord used 'Warcry'! All orcs are cleansed of negative status effects! All orcs temporarily become super-armored. Their attack power increases by 50%!]

[Orc Lord used 'Warcry'! All orcs are cleansed of negative status effects! All orcs temporarily become super-armored. Their attack power increases by 50%!]

[Orc Lord used 'Warcry'! All orcs are cleansed of negative status effects! All orcs temporarily become super-armored. Their attack power increases by 50%!]

I couldn't help but think, 'Don't tell me. The Orc Lords' Warcryes...'

"Whenever one uses them, do the others' attacks go up...?"

"Kuaaaaaang!"

[Orc Lord used 'Warcry'! All orcs are cleansed of negative status effects! All orcs temporarily become super-armored. Their attack power increases by 50%!]

All the Orc Lords charged towards me. The ones that didn't use Warcry shouted as they ran.

Looking at them, I grinned. Then, I turned around and ran.

It seemed I was underestimating Beyond too much.

Author's note:

The third explorer referred to Shin becoming Beyond's third explorer! I bet no one thought he'd immediately go to the higher dungeon! This is what's called Toika quality! Fast, fast!

Also, there is something our clumsy Shin missed. I'm sure the readers will be able to pick up on it. ^^

Chapter 139. The Third Explorer (3)

I threw some useless items and tested their attack power. It wasn't as strong as I thought. It was just enough for the troll's bones I obtained on the 51st floor to become dust by touching their weapons.

... If I get hit even once, I'll die! I'll definitely die!

Once I ran into them once, Orc Lords suddenly began to appear from all pathways. Once I got surrounded, it would be the end. I realized I had stepped off the wrong foot. I should have killed them the moment I saw them. This wouldn't have happened if I didn't run away!

“Kuaaaaang!”

“Yeah, yeah, I got it, you bastards! Eat this!”

Confirming that an Orc Lord appeared in the path I was trying to charge through, I threw out a Heroic Strike. Although I managed to kill him, five more Orc Lords appeared behind him. Now that it had come to this, there was no other choice!

“Uwaaaaaaaak!”

[You used Crimson Roar. Everything blazes as flames.]

Although I had not thought about it, the flames that began to burn everything continued to get stronger. It seemed the reflective property of the dungeon's walls had strengthened the flames. Of course, as the flames were created by Crimson Roar, they did not harm me, while they served as poison for the Orc Lords.

“Kuaaang!”

“Hu, Humaaaaaan!”

However, even after taking Crimson Roar, which could be said to be my strongest area of effect skill, a few Orc Lords were still alive. If they were the same Orc Lord as the one on the 5th floor, it would not have been possible. It seemed their defense was much higher as well.

Even so, Crimson Roar was still a powerful skill. After inhaling the smoke, the few that survived the flames staggered, and were then easily killed by Peika's Thunder Spears. Each of them gave 1,000 gold. It was the same amount as what the 5th floor's Orc Lord gave. Even though Beyond's Orc Lords were much stronger, they still only gave 1,000 gold. It was very infuriating.

“Huff, huff... It's been a while since I ran so hard. I didn't even have my elementals summoned... Peika, Ruyue!”

[Ugh, it smells burnt.]

[Meat? Are you eating that?]

“You’ll get sick if you do, Ruyue. First, materialize.”

[Okay!]

Telling Ruyue not to eat the Orc Lords once more, I checked the corpses of the Orc Lords, which were disappearing into particles of light. After gifting me gold, they were disappearing completely. I gritted my teeth at the sight.

I could only use Crimson Roar once per day. As it was the same for Floor Master skills, I had to come up with a way that relied on my own strength only. No matter how confident I was in my spearmanship, against the Orc Lords, I couldn’t continue to attack and retreat repeatedly. I could toy with just one or two Orc Lords, but since more Orc Lords always arrived when I found one, doing so would be foolish.

“No choice then. I have to use my crossbow.”

Silver Bone Crossbow, obtained on the 30th floor. I thought that I was too strong to use it now, but with Spirit Aura, any weapon would become powerful, regardless of its quality. Plus, I could use the 51st floor’s troll bones as crossbow bolts for additional damage. It would be nice if I could use Flame Cartridge as well, but it only added the flame attribute and small explosions. As Peika’s ability was much stronger, it wasn’t useful at all now.

“It would be ideal to shoot crossbow bolts at their mouths, so they can’t use warcry...”

[I can bait them!]

Peika shouted with confidence. With Spirit Aura’s increased level, she could now control the trajectory of projectiles as well. I patted her head to thank her for letting me know. With this, I may have found a way out.

“Kuaaaang!”

“I’ve already killed dozens of them... Just how many of them are there? Alright. Ruyue, Peika, let’s go!”

[Okay!]

[Run? Do I run?]

“Yeah, run!”

[Auuuuuuuuu!]

Ruyue kicked off the ground. With a potion in my mouth, I raised my crossbow.

“Peika, I’ll give you as much mana as you need, so put lightning

into the bolts like they're Thunder Spears."

[Huhu, okay! I really like Master lately. It feels like Master is filled with lightning from head to toe!]

[No! Every strand of hair on Shin is ice cold!]

That's a compliment right? You were trying to compliment me, right? It seemed elementals thought of me strangely as my affinity to different elements got higher. As I broke through the pathway, I shot a bolt at an Orc Lord's head.

"Kuak!"

"Nice, Peika!"

The bolt went directly into the mouth of the Orc Lord as it flickered with lightning. There was no need to doubt Peika's ability. With that, I just had to raise my reaction speed so that I could attack the Orc Lords the moment they appeared.

"Kuaakuk!"

"Kuaaaakak!"

"I won't stop shooting until you guys shut up!"

Ruyue continued to run. Once they used Warcry, they would continue running regardless of whether I shot a bolt in their mouth or up their ass, but as long as they didn't use Warcry, they didn't have the temper to withstand the pain and shout.

If other Orc Lords didn't appear, I could simply use Elemental Blade to cut them down. If they did, I just had to shoot bolts into their mouths too.

“Kuaaagaaaga!”

“Elemental Blade! Can you stop making those weird noises!?”

[Critical Hit!]

Shooting, slashing, shooting, shooting, slashing. Although simple, I had to make sure the bolts I shot did not miss their targets. If one accidentally hit the wall, it would change trajectory and fly back. If it hit me, even I would feel pain.

[Twenty two up ahead!]

“Damn, there sure are a lot of them.”

Beyond's maze had a completely different structure than the First Dungeon's. Unlike the First Dungeon, where I could just hunt monsters and move forward, Beyond had multiple pathways that

twisted and turned. Monsters appeared in the pathways, but there were also spacious areas where a large number of monsters were gathered. The worst part was that they respawned rather quickly. In other words, if I got lost and went back to where I was, the monsters I defeated would have respawned. However, as I said before, my intelligence stat was preventing that from happening.

“Agh, damn it!”

“Kuaaaang!”

[Orc Lord used ‘Warcry’! All orcs are cleansed of negative status effects! All orcs temporarily become super-armored. Their attack power increases by 50%!]

If even a single Orc Lord succeeded in using Warcry, like just now, I had to stop using my crossbow to shut them up. As they became super-armored, it was impossible. I had to take my spear and aim at their vital spots, as I weaved through them on Ruyue. It was the start of an exciting fight of cat and mouse. That said, if their number went over 30, I couldn’t handle their increasing numbers with my crossbow or with elemental magic.

As a result, I had to do what I had not done for a long time.

“Peika, materialize!”

[I've been waiting for those words!]

Confirming the number of high-grade Mana Potions (379) in my possession, I materialized Peika. The elemental magic of a materialized elemental was incomparably stronger than when the elemental was unmaterialized. Of course, there were downsides to it as well. When materialized elementals got attacked, they would lose mana, and excessive damage might reverse-summon the elementals.

“Kuaaaaang!”

“An elemental, it's an elemental!”

After appearing in midair with her elegant dress, Peika did not even have the chance to show off her beauty, as she swung around a lightning whip. Although Orc Lords charged toward her, as Peika could fly, they were unable to catch her.

“They can't get paralyzed, so you have to just damage them!”

[I know!]

Peika's whip was strong enough to instantly burn the Orc Lord's defensive equipment, and it was fast. Her whip, which was condensed from her elemental power, weaved through the Orc Lords as it damaged them. Meanwhile, I secured our escape route and knocked down the Orc Lords that stood in its way. This damned area was half made of air and half made of Orc Lords.

[Master, the walls have amplification and reflect enchants!]

“Oh, so those things are called enchants!?”

I pretended to thank Peika for her currently useless piece of info, and continued to swing my spear. Then, a strange voice rang out in my ear.

[Alright, with this, I'll take care of them at once! Thunder Dragon Wave!]

“Mm?”

When I looked up, Peika's powerful lightning whip shot up past my head diagonally from below. Frightened, I jumped back, and the whip hit the ceiling, bouncing to the ground with greater strength, bouncing again and going through my legs. At the lightning whip's destination was an Orc Lord that was about to strike her.

“Kuaaaak!”

The lightning whip easily tore through the Orc Lord's head and continued to fly forward. After hitting the wall again, it bounced back and hit another Orc Lord's arm. The whip continued to bounce around, hitting an Orc Lord's leg, then hitting Peika's body. Surprisingly, Peika looked even stronger!

[Huu, it got more energy!]

The lightning whip then went through Peika's body, having gotten even stronger, and burned or detonated the Orc Lords one by one. It didn't matter that they were super-armored. The whip, which endlessly strengthened itself, pierced through them without ever giving them the chance to counterattack. When it sometimes pierced through Peika's body, it only became stronger before continuing on to annihilate the Orc Lords. Me? I was frantically dodging Peika's whip!

After some time, the Orc Lords gathering here to attack us dwindled until not many remained. Eventually, when I could no longer hear Peika's spirited shout and the flickers of her lightning whip...

[Done!]

Peika put down her whip refreshingly, like she just finished doing her laundry. The whip that had been bouncing around struck Peika's body and was completely absorbed by her. Peika's face was sparkling even brighter than when she first materialized, as she looked at me and winked.

[Didn't I do well, Master!?!]

“Y-Yeah. Since you don't get injured by your own weapon, you can even do that... Amazing.”

[Huhuhu, right, I'm amazing!]

[Chii, I can do it too!]

To be honest, I was surprised seeing Peika utilize the environment's special trait in her attack. Although I knew attacks got stronger when the walls reflected them, I didn't think to use that property as I needed to calculate the trajectory. After all, it wasn't my forte.

However, after seeing it once, I could understand it more easily. It was just that I had not thought about it before. Now that I did, I understood how to reflect my attacks three or four times to amplify the damage. Any more could be a bit tricky as I would need to dodge the attack and calculate the trajectory again, but it wasn't impossible if I tried it once or twice. In fact, I already had a few trajectories in mind.

I finally realized. If I didn't try to use my brain, it wouldn't be used! I was underestimating my intelligence too much. With all the bonus stats, my intelligence stat was now at 76. If I wanted, such calculations should be a piece of cake.

“Peika, you helped me realize something important. Thanks.”

[Really?]

“Yeah.”

Until now, I thought I had fought rather intelligently. However, that wasn't the case. I had mistaken using the techniques I learned with my body and my reaction speed with using my intelligence.

Right. Until now, I was able to get by with no problem with my superior ability. Rather than intelligence, technique and strength were more important in fights. However, from now, in Beyond, that was no longer the case. If it wasn't for Peika, I would have had difficulty fighting them just now.

The hint had been given to me already. The stacking Orc Lord's Warcries. The dungeon wall's power of reflection and amplification. I had wasted my effort when the answer was already there. To defeat the Orc Lords, I had to do the same thing they were doing. Using the wall's property, I had to amplify my attacks. Luckily, I even had a long-ranged weapon.

"Hu... Good. Let's use my brain."

I felt quite awkward saying it, but I ignored the awkwardness for now. What was important was to clear Beyond's 1st floor. It was important to utilize my potential. For a long time, I did not apply my intelligence stat in battles. Now was the time to right that mistake.

Just like that, two weeks passed.

I was still in Beyond's 1st floor.

Chapter 140. The Third Explorer (4)

Occasionally, Orc Lords dropped their meat. With a bit of expectation, I checked the meat's description. After finding out that eating it won't raise my stats, I burnt it decisively. After all, why would I eat orc meat if it didn't raise my stats? My inventory already had a hefty amount of food! The Orc Lord meat was likely there for explorers that didn't prepare food beforehand. If it wasn't, it was just that.

Compared to the First Dungeon, Beyond was incredibly big. Plus, other than the attack reflecting walls, there were tons of other traps, making it much different than the First Dungeon, where I could simply charge forward on Ruyue's back. Here, I had to constantly observe my surroundings, look for traps, and hunt Orc Lords.

New pathways and Orc Lords appeared endlessly. Because I had to keep the maze's map in mind and accurately calculate the trajectory of the crossbow bolts bouncing around, I felt like I was overtaxing my brain.

Of course, I got some benefits as well. Crossbow Marksmanship broke through low-rank and became mid-ranked. Perhaps because calculating the bolts trajectory gave a lot of experience, it was already level 2. My Elementalist skills also grew greatly. More difficult situations led to increased experience. Whoever thought of this system had to be a sadist.

I shot a bolt forward.

“Eit.”

“Kak!”

In the blink of an eye, the bolt bounced around from wall to wall, collecting more power, before it pierced the head of an Orc Lord that just made its appearance. As it had not used Warcry, it became paralyzed after taking lightning damage. I leisurely swung my spear and killed it. I had fought Orc Lords here for 2 weeks. Now, they were no longer my match.

It was the result of repeated learning. Once I understood the dungeon's structure and Orc Lords, it wasn't that hard to conquer them. When I heard an Orc Lord's footsteps, I would shoot my bolt out preemptively. As they all had the same size, as long as I knew where the footsteps were coming from, I could figure out where and when they would pop out. Using the volume of their footsteps, I calculated the distance between us and shot my bolt out so that it would hit their face. The result was as I just showed with that Orc Lord.

Hunting a single Orc Lord was very easy. When there were two or three, the calculations got a bit trickier, but I could still manage it.

The problem was when there were over 20 of them.

“Kuaaaaaa!”

“Kuaaaang! Human!”

“Agh, those bastards are doing that shit again.”

On the 1st floor, there were spacious areas, which were always filled with dozens of Orc Lords. It wasn't even big enough for them to all lie down and sleep, so I didn't know what the hell they were gathered for. Almost as if they were suffering from insomnia, they all waited with their eyes wide open. Once they saw me, they waved their hands in greeting and shouted. Seeing the Orc Lords swinging their glaives, which never dropped, was infuriating to say the least.

“Kuaaaang!”

“Kuaaaang!”

“Tsk, like I'd let myself be hit by your crappy spears!”

However, if I fought them straight on, it would only be my vitality that is reduced to zero. I fell back, dodging their charges. Just like I had been doing for the past 2 weeks, I raised my crossbow and shot out hundreds of bolts towards the walls, as I continuously moved.

The troll bone bolts ran out on the third day, and I was subsisting on skeleton bones. But now, I was running low on those as well. Once I completely ran out, I would have to resort to elemental magic, which took three times as much mana. Considering the number of Mana Potions I had left, it wasn't a wise choice.

“Kuhak!”

“Kuk!”

The bolts I shot out bounced around without hitting each other, then assaulted the Orc Lords. I ducked or moved to the side to dodge the flying crossbow bolts as I shot even more bolts. Ruyue was, of course, dematerialized. It wouldn't be funny if she was hit by my bolts.

[Mid-rank Crossbow Marksmanship became level 3. Even without imbuing mana, you can damage spiritual bodies.]

After continuously shooting bolts and cutting down Orc Lords for 5 minutes, the Orc Lords were wiped out. My Crossbow Marksmanship also leveled up.

I couldn't remember exactly when, but I became able to hit spiritual bodies with my spear when my Spear Technique became high-ranked. I didn't know whether my Spear Technique affected it in any way, but I became able to attack spiritual bodies with crossbows at just mid-rank level 3. In truth, it was quite unexpected. It meant I had already become skillful enough to apply the principles of Spear Technique in marksmanship.

Damn it, somebody, somebody find my identity! I'm a spearman!

It was then. I heard the ground tremor from far away. It gave me a sense of unease. Here, other than me, only the Orc Lords were able to make the ground tremor.

At the same time, the dungeon walls shook and began to transform. The twisted pathways became straight, and new pathway opened up. It seemed to be about... 2 kilometers long? It was a distance I could easily cover within 30 seconds, but that wasn't what was important.

“Gate...!”

There, I saw the same gate I used to cross over to Beyond. I tried to regain my composure, as I felt the mana emanating from the gate. At the same time, I dispersed my mana out to check for any traps on the way. The result – they were both clean. The gate was real, and there were no traps.

Mana detection and mana dispersion were both things I learned in the past 2 weeks. I had naturally developed a habit for them as I constantly used them to locate the damned Orc Lords and to check for traps. Although they were so basic that they didn't even register as skills, they were probably my biggest gain.

In any case, now that I knew the gate was real, I knew what to do.

“I have to kill all the Orc Lords...!”

“Kuaaaaang!”

“Kuoooong!”

“Human meat!”

“This is the only chance to eat it!”

There was a simple reason that the pathway became straight. It was to make me unable to dodge the Orc Lord’s rush. About a hundred Orc Lords came from behind, and there were even more coming from the front.

As expected, they all shouted Warcries as if they were competing, and in this narrow space, they amplified each other to a horrifying extent. My ear rang from their repeated shouting, and their endlessly amplified spirit almost made my body stiffen.

“Kuu... I didn’t think I would have trouble moving my body...!”

Could it be? Was the reason that the maze continued endlessly to help me grow my ability to handle them all at once? Looking at the walls that still had their reflect and amplification property, I became certain. However, as the pathway changed shape, I had to recalculate the trajectory from the beginning.

That said, once I defeated all the Orc Lords and arrived at the gate, I could proudly say that I completely cleared this place.

Even though I had gotten used to Crossbow Marksmanship in the past two weeks, I didn't think there would be such an annoying final hurdle. Thinking how sadistic the person that made this dungeon is, I shouted.

“Crimson Roar!”

As the Orc Lords were all clumped up together, I easily sent them to their death with Crimson Roar. Then, I jumped into the gate and left Beyond. Hehe, with such an easy method of getting through, why would I trouble myself and use my brain!?

[You conquered Beyond's 1st floor. You can challenge the dungeon's 52nd floor.]

[Your maximum HP and MP increase by 2%. You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[Experience has been added to skills you frequently used to progress through Beyond's 1st floor.]

[Mid-rank Crossbow Marksmanship became level 4. Your bolts piercing power becomes greater, and they can pierce through two enemies at once.]

[Mid-rank Spirit Mastery became level 9. Taking a step forward in handling all souls connected to you, it becomes

easier to feel a sense of unity with them and their destructive power increases.]

[Mid-rank Spirit Aura became level 7. Spirit Aura's power increases and less mana is required to maintain it.]

[Mid-rank Elemental Control became level 7. You can draw out the power of your contracted elementals almost perfectly.]

[Mid-rank Elemental Contract became level 7. Your contracted elementals become even more powerful.]

Just by clearing Beyond's 1st floor, I gained incredible rewards. First, I obtained the same amount of stat points as when I leveled up. Then, the skills I used to fight the Orc Lords jumped up in experience. I could feel that I was much stronger than I was just a moment ago.

Beyond was truly amazing. Of course, as great as the rewards were, Beyond was huge, the monsters were stronger, and the traps were annoying. It would only get harder as well. However, now that I tasted the fruit of my efforts, I vowed to conquer this place. There was someone fanning my resolution. It was Loretta, who was sweating and fanning me with a folding fan.

"Shin-nim, don't be mad, please?"

"I'm not mad. I just think that you could have explained more

about Beyond in the time you spent fooling around.”

“F-Fooling around!? That was the most important thing to me!”

I had to restock on Mana Potions and repair my weapon, but I decided to put it off for later.

“I’ll be off then. Because of a certain someone, I didn’t go home for two weeks, so my parents must be mad.”

“Ah, aaah! Shin-nim, I’m sorry! I’m sorrrry! Forgive me!”

Although I couldn’t go outside while I was trapped in Beyond, the explorers’ communication channel still worked. More importantly, phones still worked. It was a mystery I would never solve.

Although my parents and friends were shocked when I told them I couldn’t go back for a while, since I could call them, they didn’t worry about me that much.

Except Ludia, that is.

After returning, I said hello to mother and father, took a shower, and got changed. Immediately afterwards, Ludia came back from the dungeon in a hurry and embraced me. Because her pale expression scared me, I couldn’t force her off of me.

Because I disappeared for two weeks, I couldn't make any excuses either. Especially because I didn't say anything beforehand. In Ludia's perspective, it could be seen as me leaving her behind. Tsk, just when her condition was getting better...!

“You won't get off, right?”

“Un.”

Like a kitten, Ludia rubbed her face against my arm and marked her territory. ‘How did that proud princess become like this...?’ With that thought, I patted her head in pity. Mother, who suddenly appeared in that timing, gave me a thumbs up. I became certain that mother had an ability I wasn't aware of.

After a spending a somewhat comfortable and somewhat itchy time together, Ludia regained her composure and suddenly said something absurd.

“Ah, our guild house's environment changed.”

“What? The environment changed?”

“Un. If you go out, it's dark, regardless of whether it's day or night. But the area I walked became a bit brighter. Also, there was a message that said something like 0.5% of Beyond's Residential Area being explored.”

“Uh... Mm...”

After listening to her, I remembered. When I became a Beyond explorer, I had heard a message saying that my residence and resort had changed their affiliation to Beyond. My guild house had been sent to a strange place!

Author's note:

Beyond's 1st floor, clear! The next chapter will show Marianne's Garden, flying through unidentified space!

PS – I added some information on Crossbow Marksmanship. Skills' level up messages don't only show the result of the skills' growth. They also show effects shared between skills. That is, without high-rank Spear Technique, Crossbow Marksmanship being level 3 wouldn't be able to attack spiritual bodies!

Chapter 141. The Third Explorer (5)

Immediately afterward, I headed to the guild house with Ludia. In the hall, I met Shuna for the first time in quite a long time.

“Ah, Crown Prince-nim, Ludia! H-Hello!”

“Hello, Miss Shuna.”

“You can just call me Shuna. You don’t have to be so formal! C-Can I also say Shin-nim?”

“You want me to stop being formal, but you want to address me so respectfully!?”

Shuna was hard to understand. However, since she was cute, it was pleasant talking to her. She was more cute, rather than beautiful.. She looked good with Ludia, who exuded a more noble and mature aura.

“Then, Shuna.”

“Yes, Shin-nim! Kyaa, I called him by his name!”

I was surprised by how happy she was, but I didn’t say anything as my instincts were warning me to not question it. More specifically, I had a feeling that Ludia might kill Shuna.

“You must have been surprised because the guild house suddenly moved. Can we still get to the Residential Area?”

“Yes! We can go to the First Dungeon’s Residential Area just like before! Also...”

“Also?”

Shuna stretched her arms out to the side and shouted.

“We can also go to the Second, Third, and Fourth Dungeon’s Residential Areas!”

“... What?”

“Ah, of course, it’s only the Residential Areas, not the dungeons themselves.”

I was confused for a moment but I soon understood. I knew this place’s affiliation changed to Beyond, but I didn’t think it would let me go other dungeons’ Residential Areas. Eh? Hold on, does that mean...

An absurd thought crossed my mind, and I was then shocked that it wasn’t as absurd as I initially thought.

“Did this guild... transcend the First Dungeon?”

“What does that mean, Shin-nim?”

“... It means we might get some new members, Shuna.”

Shuna clapped in response, but Ludia didn't look so happy.

“My dream of a newlywed's home...”

“I can hear you. And that's not it.”

To be honest, I wanted to explore Beyond's Residential Area, but it was more important to confirm whether my conjecture was right. I pulled up my friend list and immediately took action.

As a result, in less than 20 minutes, a few people gathered at our guild house.

“Ooh, is this the first present my son is giving me!?”

“No, father. This is my mansion. I won't be giving it to you, so stop dreaming.”

“Amazing. I can really enter...”

“Wow, this is Shin-nim's mansion? How cool!”

“Kang Shin, how did you climb the dungeon to be able to afford a

mansion like this?”

“It’s nice now that we’re all here!”

Marianne’s Garden became noisy. Shuna became flustered seeing them for the first time and hid behind my back, while Ludia linked her arm with mine and frowned.

“As you guys know, this is my friend Ludia. The pretty, pink haired girl is Shuna, Ludia’s friend. They’re both guild members.”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Hwaya Mastiford.”

“He... Hello!”

Shuna easily fell for Hwaya’s charm and sociability. With Hwaya serving as the mediator, the awkwardness quickly disappeared and Shuna learned to talk with others. However, Ludia seemed unhappy for some reason and continued to stay by my side.

Of course, there was a reason I called them over. It was impossible before, but it was possible now. It was to create a guild that transcended the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Dungeons. Since they all wanted to join a guild, things went smoothly. Other than me, only Hwaya owned a residence. Since she adamantly said she wanted to join my guild, there was no problem whatsoever.

It felt like it was just yesterday that she said she wanted to make her own organization, but now she was acknowledging me as the

guild master. It was the same for Sumire, who happily joined my guild. That said, a lot had changed since the first time the communication channel opened.

Of course, I had changed a lot too. Although I thought it wasn't necessary to form a group, after partying with Hwaya a couple times, I had changed my mind. I had created the guild on my own accord and invited others since I became a Beyond explorer, but even if it was Hwaya standing in my position, I would have happily joined her guild.

The biggest reason I refused her offer back then was that I couldn't trust her. Half a year had passed since then, and things were a bit different. I trusted Hwaya and I trusted Sumire. It was the same for Walker, who was tied by a contract. We were stronger together, and as dungeon explorers, we could trust each other. The guild would only bind us together more.

[Guild 'Revival' became D rank! When challenging Event Dungeons or Event Raids, when 5 or more guild members are present, all guild members' abilities will be increased by 5%!]

[Guild members: Kang Shin (Guild Master, First – Gold & Beyond), Kang Yungoong (First – Gold), Su Ye-Eun (First – Gold), Palludia Gren Ehuir (First – Silver), Shuna Aren Lihita (First – Silver), Hwaya Eleni Mastiford (Second – Gold), Minami Violet Sumire (Second – Gold), Edward Walker (Third – Gold). Total: 8]

Now, it was more like a guild. Seeing the list of guild members, I smiled. Walker had also broken through the 50th floor. With this, couldn't we be called elites? Plus, I liked their our abilities increased when 5 or more of us were together. Event Dungeons and Event Raids were on Earth as well. Together, our chance of survival would increase. I wish Loretta would have told me about this sooner!

“Ooh, when my vitality hits zero, is this where I'll come back to?”

“How nice. Shin, you'll prepare a room for me next to yours, right...? Huhu.”

“Ah, I call the other side!”

“Hmph, I'm going to live in Shin's room!”

“As the guild master, I'm claiming an entire hallway to myself, so stop dreaming.”

Ignoring the girls' complaints, I assigned them their rooms. When I did, keys were given to them, binding the rooms to them entirely. It was the feature of a guild house. Since the mansion had over 100 rooms, giving private rooms to the guild members wouldn't have any problems.

“Oi, Kang Shin. What's that?”

“What, it’s just a Giant Iron Boar and a Flame Drake.”

“You’re using those precious things as decorations...? You’re as amazing as always.”

While everyone was focused on the inside of the mansion, Walker was looking at the garden. The Giant Iron Boar was now 7, 8 meters, making it awkward to even call it ‘giant.’ The Flame Drake corpse was also shrinking. It wasn’t that mana was leaving the corpses. Now that I could better detect mana, I could clearly feel it. They were being compressed.

I didn’t know what they were working so hard for even as corpses. I just knew that Marianne’s Garden wasn’t a normal space. Since it looked like they were making themselves more expensive, I decided to just let them be.

“Alright, there’s something we need to do first.”

Although everyone looked like they wanted to explore the mansion more, I gathered them together.

“We need to find out what’s outside.”

“Monsters?”

“Monsters can’t appear in the Residential Area. But since Ludia said she felt a strange presence, there might be something else.”

“Don’t scare me.”

Hwaya grabbed onto my sleeve as she said that. Thinking back to the time she was scared by the spiders, it seemed she was rather weak hearted. Ludia looked mad when she saw Hwaya, but she soon calmed down. You’ve improved, Ludia!

However, feeling my body getting heavier, I looked back. Ye-Eun and Shuna were also grabbing onto me. I smiled at them kindly and spoke.

“All of you, get off of me.”

We left the garden. It was truly dark. Because of the thick fog, we couldn’t see far ahead either. However, when we walked forward, the fog disappeared.

“Do you want to split up?”

“Yeah, let’s split into two teams. Contact us periodically or if you find anything.”

I went to the right with Minami, Ludia, and Walker. I dispersed my mana as far as I could to increase my detection range, when Minami asked me.

“Shin-nim, you just expanded your aura outward, right?”

“Yeah. By dispersing my mana, I can expand my senses.”

“Wow, amazing... If it’s okay, can you teach me how?”

“Sure. We’re both guild members, so I can teach you later.”

“Thank you! Ah, and you don’t have to be formal! You can call me Sumire too.”

“O-Okay.”

Now that I thought about it, I had not talked to Minami, or rather, Sumire, much. When we met in Yeungdeungpo to clear the Event Dungeon, she seemed impressed by my strength and continued to address me with ‘nim’ in respect.

I had seen sparkling eyes like hers often. The martial artists, who respected father, often had such eyes. Considering her strength and attitude towards martial arts, she might be a martial artist herself.

“I heard you learned martial arts from Yungoon ajusshi, but you’re stronger than him now, right?”

“No, I’m a step behind father in terms of the depth in martial arts, but overall... I should be stronger.”

“I knew it...!”

Burdensome. Sumire’s sparkling eyes and Ludia hugging my arm like she wanted to break it were burdensome!

Wait, hold on.

“Walker, did you feel that?”

“I did. It looks like a barrier of some sort.”

I expanded my senses, but they were cut off like they collided into something. I dispersed my mana in all directions, checking where my senses were cut off and how far they could reach. The fog in the area my senses reached also disappeared. The ground revealed a stone floor, while a huge wall stood in the distance. Beyond it, I saw a medieval castle similar to my own mansion. After that, my mana was cut off completely.

“Amazing...! You’re really amazing, Shin-nim!”

“Huhu.”

Sumire complimented me and Ludia got happy in my place. I didn’t know why.

“What do you think that is? A new dungeon?”

“There are Event Dungeons in Residential Areas too.”

“I don’t know. I feel like that’s...”

Sumire and Ludia thought the castle could be an Event Dungeon. However, after observing the outline of the castle walls, Walker proposed.

“Oi, Kang Shin. Isn’t that a mansion like yours?”

Almost as if to prove that his conjecture was right, a voice rang in my ear. It was the voice of a beautiful, young man. I realized after I heard the voice. It was coming from Beyond’s communication channel!

[Go back, Third Explorer. I have no intention of dealing with you.]

[You are... Excuse me. I just came here, so I was exploring the Residential Area with my companions.]

Perhaps interested in what I said, he became silent for a moment. Just when I thought he no longer wanted to talk, his voice rang out again.

[... A guild master, I see. I was once also interested in such childish games. In any case, go back. What you desire isn’t here. Go west. You’ll find some treasures there.]

[Thank you for telling me. We'll be off then.]

[Wait. You must have been acknowledged by an administrative guild master.... Who is it?]

[It's Fairy Garden's master, Loretta.]

[... Is that so...]

His silence continued. I sensed something from his silence. Could it be that he is...?

[She is... No.]

With that, I was certain.

[No, it's nothing. Second Explorer is also listening. It's fine, go back.]

Feeling strange, I turned back. He was my senior as he entered Beyond before me. Although he sounded young, he must have lived for much longer than me. Perhaps, he was Loretta's...

“I can't understand why I'm feeling so weird...”

“What's wrong? Did you use your mana too much? Are you

okay?”

“Shin-nim?”

“N-No, I’m fine. Let’s go. That was another explorer’s house. He said there’s something to the west, so let’s go there.”

“Okay!”

“How kind of him to tell us.”

Sumire, Ludia, and Walker followed after me. I still felt weird. Loretta must have known, right? Then why didn’t she tell me about it? No, it was probably me that was weird. There was no doubt about it. Whether Loretta’s first love was here or not, it had nothing to do with me.

After 5 minutes, we got a report from the team that went the other way that they found something.

Author’s note:

Guild Revival has absorbed Earth’s explorers! This is the start of a legend!

What did the other team find!? Find out next chapter!

Chapter 142. The Third Explorer (6)

“It looks like an Event Dungeon! Let’s go!”

Pointing at the mansion surrounded by thorn-covered walls, father shouted. I retorted shortly.

“Let’s go back.”

“No, why!?”

Walker answered in my stead.

“Kang Yungoong, this is a mansion. It belongs to one of the two other explorers Kang Shin talked about.”

“What, it isn’t an Event Dungeon!?”

Father shouted in shock as he touched the tightly shut iron gate. Immediately afterward, the mana flowing through the iron gate bounced his hand off. Father really was an idiot! At the same time, a voice rang in our ear again. It was the Beyond communication channel.

[Don’t. Come. In.]

The cold, snapping voice belonged to a woman. I couldn’t help but sigh. To think the second explorer was also staying in the

mansion...

[Sorry for my companion's rudeness. He thought it was an Event Dungeon. I'll take him back with me immediately. Sorry.]

[Don't ever, come back... don't, bother me...]

Just by talking for a bit, I immediately understood. The way this woman talked easily exhausted people. We'll be living together in the Residential Area, so how could I not come back!? Even so, I told her what she wanted to hear.

[Understood. We'll be going back now. Sorry for troubling you.]

After apologizing to her, I glared at father, then brought everyone away from the mansion. Before I was about to leave, however, she asked me.

[Did your world... fall?]

[No.]

[I see...]

She continued.

[If you think you'll die, tell me... I want to buy your corpse.]

[It's not for sale! And what do you mean, when I think I'll die!?!]

All these seniors are annoying!

The treasure the first explorer talked about was indeed that. Located in the west were Event Dungeons. Right, there were more than just one. They were sprawled across the field in the form of gates. There was nothing beyond them, so gates of mysterious Event Dungeons were the only things that were here. This had to be the treasure he talked about.

Looking at the Event Dungeon gates scattered about, I wondered if the other dungeons' Residential Areas also initially had gates to Event Dungeons. It would be strange if only Beyond's Residential Area had Event Dungeons, and since I had entered an Event Dungeon in Fairy Garden, I thought it was a possibility.

"Alright, we've looked around, so let's go back."

"Yeah, let's go."

"I'm hungry."

"There were food ingredients in the mansion's storehouse. I can cook something up. I wanted to treat everyone to a meal, so this is the perfect opportunity."

“Hm, the new daughter from Japan has good manners. Shin, father recommends her as the new daughter.”

“H-How could I be Shin-nim’s... Rather than that, I want to be Shin-nim’s disciple!”

“Don’t marry a girl without her consent, father.”

No one objected to my decision of going back. We exchanged small talk and turned away from the gates labeled SSS rank. Just like that, our exploration of Beyond’s Residential Area ended.

First Explorer bastard, I’ll get my revenge one day!

As I somewhat expected it when I saw trolls on the 51st floor, large humanoid monsters seemed to appear in 51st through 55th floors. Following trolls were minotaurs.

They didn’t have insane regenerative power like the trolls, but the minotaurs’ bone axes were huge and powerful. After I broke through the 52nd floor in 3 hours, I challenged the 52nd floor again. It was because the minotaurs’ sharp bones were perfect to be used as crossbow bolts. Although Beyond’s 2nd floor could be different than the 1st floor, it was better to restock on bolts than to regret not doing so later.

“Shin-nim, your eyes are slightly different now.”

“My eyes?”

When I returned to the Floor Shop to rest after spending a whole day collecting minotaur bones, Loretta suddenly spoke after staring at me intently.

“Different how?”

“Hmm, they’ve gotten slightly more serious. They were always serious, but now they look like they’re focused on one thing. Huhu, it seems Beyond wasn’t easy.”

“It took 2 weeks for a reason. There were many difficulties and a lot I had to think about.”

“With Shin-nim’s level, 2 weeks is a miracle.”

“Loretta, um...”

“Yes?”

“No, it’s nothing.”

When I stopped in the middle, Loretta looked shocked.

“Shi, Shin-nim is hiding something from me...!”

“Things I’m hiding from Loretta? There are lots of them.”

“Huk! W-What are they! Hurry, hurry up and tell me! I’ll listen to them all, even if I have to stay up the entire night! Women? It’s about women!”

“I won’t tell you. I have to go back to collect more minotaur bones.”

“Shin-niiiiiiim....!”

Maybe I didn’t do such a good job of evading the answer, as Loretta clung to me with teary eyes, almost making me forget what I wanted to say.

Just because it was Beyond, it didn’t mean that different monsters appeared on each floor. When I arrived at the 2nd floor, worrying that I might need to fight Wendigos on the 10th floor, I tilted my head when I saw more Orc Lords.

“Kuaaaang!”

“Kuaaaang!”

“Heh, their shouts are the same too.”

Just like on the First Dungeon, the Orc Lords on the 2nd floor were stronger than the Orc Lords on the 1st floor. However, as the walls’ amplification was also stronger, it didn’t pose much of a

problem. It was just annoying that Orc Lords began to throw their weapons.

Of course, as they were stronger, being hit by their weapons would instantly kill me. With their weapons' trajectories on top of the bolts' trajectories, there were more to calculate. However, once I got used to it in a couple of days, I thought of a way to kill them even quicker taking their glaives' trajectories into account. Since they threw their weapons in predictable trajectories, just by minding my position when they appeared, I could get their glaives to bounce three or four times and attack them! However, there were cases where their weapons continued to bounce around after all the Orc Lords died, threatening my life. I had to use Divine Speed to dodge these.

In the end, it only took 10 days to clear Beyond's 2nd floor. Like last time, Crimson Roar did most of the work towards the end.

“Maybe... I'm a genius...!”

[Master is talking like an arrogant young master.]

[Shin is cool!]

Around the time I cleared Beyond's 2nd floor, it was the time for college finals. After thinking for a bit, I decided to take a leave of absence. Once I got into Beyond, I wouldn't be able to leave for several days. Although I could still go to college while I was climbing the First Dungeon, it was impossible for Beyond.

Between school and dungeon, the latter was obviously more important. After all, going to college was only to satisfy mother's wishes and to give myself a proper outward identity. Even mother seemed to have changed her mind since I came back from America, as she said I could do whatever I wished about school.

However, when I told Ye-Eun about taking a leave, she pouted and took a leave as well.

“Why!?”

“I'm going to focus on the dungeon too! I'm going to obtain a god's true name and go to Beyond!”

“No, that's not something you can get so easily. You should think about it more carefully.”

“I did! I carefully thought about my future and plans for making a family!”

“No, I'm certain you didn't think carefully after hearing that. There's no way we'll become family!”

“You can't say that for certain! So I'm going to do my best!”

Damn, where did the timid and unsociable girl go, and where did this straightforward and optimistic girl come from...!? Although her unyielding mindset was burdensome, it was an extremely effective mindset to have to quickly improve as an explorer.

Plus, no matter how much I tried to stop her, it was too late. Her leave had already been approved. Ye-Eun started to grind the 50th floor boss for Frozen Crystals, as elixirs finally began to drop for her.

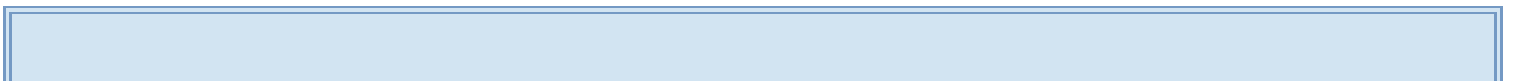
She should have had difficulty resisting Wendigo's freezing energy, but using her uniquely high mana resistance and a bunch of anti-freezing energy items she bought from the Floor Shop, she managed to defeat the Wendigo three times every day. I would be lying if I said I wasn't proud of the effort she was putting in. If her decision to go all out in climbing the dungeon was to let me see her more favorably, it was an incredibly smart decision... No, I shouldn't fall for it!

As for Beyond, the 3rd floor was slightly different than the previous floors. The monster I had been expecting to eventually appear had appeared. It was the Wraith Queen, and of course, there were more than just one of them. These half-transparent apparitions wore dreary dresses, where spider seemed to dwell. Seeing them fly around and scream in groups was quite the spectacle. Here, I came to experience a very odd situation.

[Kyaaaaaa!]

[Kiaaaaaaaak!]

[Human, living humaaaaan!]



[Wraith Queen used Vengeful Spirit's Wail! With high magic, charm, and luck stats, you resist the confusion and fear status effects!]

[Wraith Queen used Vengeful Spirit's Wail! With high magic, charm, and luck stats, you resist the confusion and fear status effects!]

[Wraith Queen used Vengeful Spirit's Wail! 'Succubus' Pupil' reflects the status effect.]

[Kyak! Humans, too many humans! There are too many humans! Save me, save me!]

“Wow...”

Once they fell and trembled, the Wraith Queens were rather cute... I mean, easy to take care of. As my magic, charm, and luck stats were high and I had raised my Soul Guard to level 5, I could easily cancel Wraith Queens' Vengeful Spirit's Wails.

Since I had also had an earring specializing in mental status effect defense, Beyond's 3rd floor became extremely easy for me. Although Wraith Queens could also summon wraiths and shoot ectoplasm arrows, the wraiths died from a single swing of my spear and ectoplasm arrows only helped me kill them quicker, as they bounced off the walls like the Orc Lords' glaives.

However, if I didn't have Soul Guard or if its level was low, I would have had to use Orc Lord's Warcry every day, running around for 5 minutes, then hiding for the other 23 hours and 55 minutes. Beyond's 3rd floor was undoubtedly a place to test one's mental or status effect defense. Though, since there were still sleeping gases, poisonous swamps, poisonous arrows, dark areas, and ice and lightning traps, it did a fine job tormenting the explorer in multiple other ways.

Considering the First Dungeon's structure, I expected Orc Lords to appear on the 3rd floor, but only Wraith Queens appeared on the 3rd floor.

I realized then. Even in the First Dungeon, there were multiple occasions where the monsters that appeared on the 1st and 2nd floors were separate from monsters that appeared on the 3rd floors. The 4th floors would then have a combination from both, and the 5th floors would have strengthened versions of them.

If Beyond worked similarly, I would have to fight both Orc Lords and Wraith Queens on the 4th floor, and 5th floor could have monsters that took the strengths of Orc Lords and Wraith Queens. Monsters that could use both mental and physical attacks... What kind of hellish monster would that be? Thankfully, my mental defense was extremely solid.

However... I couldn't keep following the dungeon. Now that I somewhat knew what I would have to face, I wanted to smack the dungeon on the back of its head.

As such, I sent a message using the guild communication

channel.

[Everyone, I won't be able to see you for a while.]

[N-No, Shin, don't. It's my fault. I'm sorry, please come back. I won't be selfish anymore. I won't secretly crawl into your bed either.]

As expected, Ludia started by apologizing.

[Why? Did something happen? Can I help somehow? ... Also, Palludia, who did you say crawled into Shin's bed?]

[That's great. I won't have to see your face, how fortu... Kuhuk!]

Hwaya and Walker also responded as I expected. However, father's response was surprising.

[Are you training?]

[Father...]

He found out instantly.

[I knew you were troubled because your spearmanship wouldn't improve recently... Do you need father's help?]

[No, I'm trying to do it by myself, father.]

[Hmm, I see. Right, you are a proper martial artist now.]

[I want to help Shin-nim too... but my attainment in spearmanship is still too low ...]

Whenever Sumire had time, she was learning spearmanship from me.

[Shin, did I do something wrong?]

[Like father said, I'm just going to train. It's not because of you, so don't worry.]

[How long will you be gone for?]

[I don't know. It might be a while though.]

[... Un, I'll be patient. But if it's too long...]

[Then I'll obtain a god's true name before you come back!]

[G-Good luck, Shin-nim!]

Ye-Eun interrupted Ludia and shouted with spirit. Shuna also chimed in to cheer me on. With a grin, I replied.

[I'll leave the communication channel open, so we can always talk. Don't worry too much.]

[If you obtain what you want, let's have a spar when you come back.]

[Sure, father.]

After responding confidently, I got up from the place I was resting. The Wraith Queens that were flying around screamed and charged toward me the moment they saw me. I raised my spear and aimed it towards them. I planned on only using my spear to fight the Wraith Queens. Ah, and Peruta Circuit as well.

The reason was simple. Against the Wraith queens, I could freely use my spear without worrying about dying, and in here... in here...!

Sorry father, but it seems skill experience goes up twice as much in here! I'll come visit with Peruta's spear techniques!

Chapter 143. What We Can Do (1)

There were two skill experience calculations in Beyond. The first was when I used skills while fighting Beyond's monsters. I didn't know whether it was because they were Floor Master class, because there were so many of them, or because it was Beyond's special characteristic, but skill experience undoubtedly increased more compared to when I used skills in other places. For example, Crossbow Marksmanship had soared in levels, and by the time I cleared Beyond's 2nd floor, it became mid-rank level 6.

The second was when I cleared Beyond's floors. The skills I mainly used to clear the floors increased exponentially. Because of it, Elemental Control, Spirit Aura, and Elemental Contract had all risen to mid-rank level 8.

Although I wanted to raise their levels more, I wanted to increase my Spear Technique levels more.

Peruta said I would have the qualification to learn his spearmanship when my Peruta Circuit became level 7 and I mastered high-rank Spear Technique. His spear techniques were able to deal irrecoverable wounds to the Demon Army Commander, endlessly attack by continuously recovering mana, and both attack and defend at the same time. To me, who had lived three quarters of my life without knowing mana, he seemed like a martial god. I wanted to learn his skills. This desire was as strong as my desire to climb to the dungeon.

If there was another skill I wanted to raise using this opportunity, it was Soul Guard. The Wraith Queen's Vengeful

Spirit's Wail was an extremely strong mental status effect magic. Just by blocking it, Soul Guard's skill experience would go up by a lot. Beyond's 3rd floor was full of such wailing noonims. After I used skill points to raise SoulGuard to level 5, I was having trouble training it, so I couldn't let go of this opportunity to easily train Soul Guard.

[Kyaaaaaak!]

[Wraith Queen used Vengeful Spirit's Wail! With high magic, charm, and luck stats, you resist the confusion and fear status effects!]

“Eat... this!”

Putting great care to direct the flow of mana from Peruta Circuit to my spear, I struck the Wraith Queen's face with my spear. The basis of the attack was Tempest, which used up 300 mana. However, Tempest was actually a technique to shoot out the uncontrollable rotational force. In other words, it was an incomplete technique. The true Tempest was different. The rotational force had to be brought out more naturally while being controlled perfectly. To be honest, I didn't know what it meant.

[Kiaaaaaaaa!]

“Stop using ectoplasm arrows!”

One of Wraith Queen's specialty was shooting out dozens of ectoplasm arrows at once. Although I could just dodge them, because they bounced around, I had to move around to dodge them even when the Wraith Queen died. It was extremely annoying. Can't they stop using suicide attacks!?

"Ruyue, freeze only the Wraith Queens' mouths! Peika, when you see a Wraith Queen, first electrocute her!"

[T-That sounds fun!]

[I don't like this place. Those women's breasts are too big.]

Since I couldn't slack off on my Elementalist skills, I had my elementals summoned and on guard against the Wraith Queens. Without the Orc Lords, I could leisurely raise my skills' experience! I doubt another chance like this would come, so I had to do my best now. Mmm, maybe the Giant Wolf and Wendigo floors might be easy too...

[Too many humans, humans are scary, the living are scary...!]

"Yeah, yeah, don't worry. I'll let you rest soon."

[Human, a handsome human! There wasn't a human like that when I was alive!]

"Yeah, I'll send you off too."

Time flew when you were focused on something.

After grasping the 3rd floor's structure completely, I always turned back a step before so that the final pathway wouldn't appear. Although the crafty traps would sometimes change their locations, I always detected them with my mana and destroyed them.

Ludia was fine for the first three weeks, but after that, she began to call me once a day, sobbing and calling my name. Other than that, everything was progressing smoothly.

Then, a month passed since I entered Beyond's 3rd floor. It was the end of June. Meanwhile, a huge trouble occurred in the outside world. Hundreds of Event Dungeons had appeared on Earth. It was what Ciara prophesied.

[There are 18 just in Korea! I don't understand why there are so many in this tiny country!]

[Although there's no guarantee that Event Raids would break out, if we were to leave them alone because we're afraid, they would only come back as bigger dangers. Maybe, Earth will come to have a similar human to monster ratio as other worlds.]

[We'll have to trust Guardian and Freedom Wing. Everyone is well aware of Event Dungeons' danger now.]

[Shin, shouldn't we clear as many Event Dungeons as we can?]

[R-Right! Once Japan's Event Dungeons are taken care of, I want to join everyone too!]

At this time, my Spear Technique was at high-rank level 8. Swinging my spear and killing three Wraith Queens at once, I murmured.

[Several countries probably want to let low-ranked Event Dungeons turn into Field Dungeons.]

[... You're exactly right. They most likely want a source of Mana Stones that they can regulate and control. As for the high-ranked Event Dungeons, or what they call Gates, most say that they should be destroyed first.]

[They aren't wrong, but they're probably using that as an excuse to buy time. That way, the low-ranked Event Dungeons would turn into Field Dungeons for them to control.]

The reason was simple. It was lucrative.

In truth, high-ranked dungeons had much more value. Just look at Britain's Windermere Lake and America's Antelope Canyon. After I subjugated the bosses, their monster reproduction rate greatly decreased, giving them a safe and steady source of income. Each melting tuna was 150 million won and each wyvern was 250 million won.

However, as valuable as these two dungeons were, they were the most troublesome to clear. A countless number of rankers stepped in to clear them, and in Wyvern's Nest, many rankers died. Countries should have realized that high-ranked dungeons will be more disastrous when they become Field Dungeons.

[Yeah. A lot of the high ranking ability users were sent to A or A+ ranked dungeons. For Event Dungeons ranked S or above, the Guardian plans on clearing them one by one in order. They're sending all of their rankers. Freedom Wing and rogues are also being called to prepare for Event Raids.]

[That sounds like it's going to take a long time... It's perfect for glancing over Event Dungeons ranked B or below.]

[A lot of people are saying that low-ranked dungeons should also be cleared. But... they're all being ignored.]

It seemed humans were still only thinking about how to benefit from the change brought by Two Moon. I couldn't blame them. A year and a half passed since the world transformed into fantasy. Civilization remained unhurt by what seemed like a calamity, and monster remains and Mana Stones even improved the advancement in science and technology. It made sense that some called emergence of monsters the 'blessing of God shifting the world's paradigm.' To them, ability users killed by monsters would only be 'pain necessary for change.'

It was only obvious. As long as they didn't know about the

dungeon, as long as they didn't know about other worlds heading to ruin, it was only natural. As long as their lives weren't in danger, all humans, including me, would rather satisfy their hungry stomach than to worry about the future. The reason we were making a fuss over it was that we were dungeon explorers before we were Earth's ability users.

To make them understand, the number of dungeon explorers just had to increase over hundreds of years. During that time, countless Event Dungeons would appear and transform into Field Dungeons. Countless Event Raids would also break out and destroy Earth's civilization.

Humanity will then understand. That the emergence of monsters wasn't a blessing.

[Even if Field Dungeons don't appear, humanity already lost too much land to monsters.]

[Philippines, Madagascar, Republic of South Africa, Dominican Republic...]

There were already several ruined countries, and ten times as many countries relinquished entire regions to monsters. Even so, humans weren't considering taking back the lands claimed by monsters and were thinking about increasing monsters' territories just because they would be able to control them. This couldn't continue. Like this, Earth would only be coming closer to ruin.

[Hwaya, if you have something you want to say, say it.]

I thrust out my spear. A whirlpool instantly formed on its tip, which then shot toward the Wraith Queen's head.

[... But I'm not the guild master, Shin.]

[I'm ordering you with full confidence. Do as you'd like.]

[I want to burn all the thoughtless idiots into cinders.]

[What you want to do before that.]

[I want to get rid of all the Event Dungeons...]

At Hwaya's words, I became silent for a moment. It wasn't just because 12 Wraith Queens were flying toward me while shooting ectoplasm arrows. I could simply use Divine Speed once and take care of them all.

It was because I thought of Ciara. I was displeased and annoyed that what we were about to do was exactly what she wanted. However, since it was unavoidable for me to achieve my goals, I would have to bear with it. If I gave up my goals just because of a slight annoyance in the process, I would only regret it later.

Besides, Ciara wasn't completely wrong either. I would be safer if there were more people helping, and if I was safe, Earth would be safe as well.

Just look at the current situation. Instead of helping Earth become safer, humans were doing foolish things for their own greed. Since Guardian nor Freedom Wing couldn't get out of their selfishness, Ciara's suggestion for me to lead Earth's ability users wasn't entirely wrong.

That said, I wasn't wrong either.

[... There should be countries that don't have the necessary defensive capabilities against monsters. They should be allowing other countries' ability users to enter their gates.]

[Shin!]

[I think you know what I'm trying to say, but... 'for now,' let's try to do it 'lawfully.']

[Th.... Thank you!]

[I know what's important, Hwaya. I also know what's best for the future. If it's something we can do, we should probably do it. I doubt it'll be dangerous with our guild members' strength, but don't force them to come. Only take volunteers. I don't want to use my position as the guild master to order them around.]

[I'll help! If that's what Hwaya unni wants and what Shin-nim recommends, I'll help gladly!]

[I want to help too! I want to take this opportunity to go to Earth!]

[Clearing Event Dungeons give achievements right? I'll help too!]

[If it's what Shin wants, I'll do anything.]

[I'll help, but I want to do it alone. I want to test my improved spearmanship.]

[I probably have to help too... How annoying.]

[No, Walker. Considering the current state of affairs, you stay home and focus on protecting Yua.]

[Damn it. While you guys accomplish cool things, why do I have to stay home and be a bodyguard... Kuk!]

Wraith Queens were gathering. Traps exploded, spreading poisonous mist, frost crystals, and sleeping gas. Using Tempest, I blew them all away, then gathered my aura in my spear. White aura. It was the Heroic Aura, only allowed for Heroes.

[As for the 'others,' I'll take care of them when I get out. Just wait for one month.]

[Okay!]

[I'll wait for you, Shin-nim!]

[I love you, I want to see you.]

[Wait, who was the girl that just confessed her love to Kang Shin? She used the Floor Shop's voice changing item! I couldn't even think about buying it because it cost 1.5 million gold!]

[How can you be certain it was a girl, Walker? There are men in this guild, too... Could it be... you?]

[Do you want to fight, you old... Kuk!]

It was impossible to avoid getting attention. We were strong. We would inevitably obtain a special position compared to other ability users. In that case, I would rather do things my way.

'I don't like your methods, Ciara. People should sacrifice themselves to protect the Hero? That's wrong. That would only be a never-ending vicious cycle. Furthermore, I hate the idea that people should live or die for others. As humans, we have a right to die for our sake.'

I didn't want to restrict others. For that to be possible, the Hero had to be stronger than anyone else. He had to be so strong that they didn't need to worry about me. Thankfully, the Hero in question was an excellent man of extreme talent. Furthermore, he still had 20 years left to grow.

20 years. It was enough time for humanity to grow and come to take care of itself. Coincidentally, I had the appropriate identity to influence them toward that direction.

“Huaaaaaaaaaap!”

[Kyaaaaaaaaak!]

[Kiaaaaaaaaa!]

I thrust out the aura imbued in my spear. The spiraling aura instantly swallowed all the Wraith Queens and exploded. Perfect.

One month. I couldn't wait.

Chapter 144. What We Can Do (2)

Guild Revival's accomplishments quickly spread. It was only obvious. Father said he'd act alone, so only beautiful girls were left to clear Event Dungeons. No matter how weak they were, they would have received attention. What made it worse was that each of them had incredible strength. Even the lowest leveled Shuna had a special ability passed down in her royal family, granting her shocking defensive capability.

Perhaps because she was similar to Sumire in a lot of ways, they got along well. From what I heard in the guild communication channel, it seemed they were best friends. They were around the same age as well.

In any case, the 5 girls didn't hide their identities and confidently marched into the gates of countries that allowed foreign ability users to enter them. Of course, Hwaya provided her private plane for transportation.

Regardless of whether the Event Dungeons were ranked C or A, they cleared them thoroughly. Even when Event Raids broke out, they effortlessly cleared them. Since the Flame Witch Hwaya Mastiford was already well known, people at first suspected that they were affiliated with Britain's Guardian. However, after they identified Ludia and Ye-Eun as the girls who fought with Dragon Knight in America, they began to say that the group was under Dragon Knight's command. They were right.

Their decisive and swift action of destroying Event Dungeons regardless of their ranks drew the attention of other ability users

and various mass media. They probably wanted to know our objective, but Hwaya avoided contact with the media. After all, even if Hwaya didn't explain, everyone should already know why Event Dungeons had to be destroyed. Hwaya simply led the others to clear as many Event Dungeons as possible.

Thanks to their action, other regions began to clear their Event Dungeons too. They were probably thinking something like, 'I don't know what's what, but they must be getting something amazing. So Let's do it, too!'

They weren't wrong. Hwaya and the others were getting great benefits from clearing the Event Dungeons. However, these benefits were only available to dungeon explorers, not regular ability users. That said, if they could reduce the harm caused by governments trying to let Event Dungeons turn into Field Dungeons, that would be good for the future.

As each Event Dungeons gave at least 1 bonus stat, Hwaya and the others grew greatly, clearing 88 dungeons in the given time. Since they even cleared Event Raids perfectly, I couldn't help but be jealous after calculating the stat bonuses they must have gotten. Of course, I wasn't so stupid as to make them stop and wait for me. To me, the current training was the most important. I could bear with hearing Hwaya's bragging.

[Huhu, I just cleared my 30th.]

[Congratulations, father.]

Father also destroyed many dungeons by himself. Considering how confident he was of late, it seemed he had mastered high-rank Spear Technique. I was certain, considering how he was bragging about reaching a new height in his spearmanship. He was worthy of the self-proclaimed title of world's strongest.

[How are you doing lately, son? Is your spear training going well?]

[It's so-so. I'm coming close to grasping it.]

[Ho, even so, you won't be able to reach father's level.]

[Just wait and see.]

I had to concentrate on Beyond even more. Today was the last day of the one month period I promised.

With Guild Revival's effort, and Guardian and Freedom Wing trying to clear high-ranked dungeons, 222 Event Dungeons had been cleared so far. It was just over half of the total. There were still two SS ranked dungeons in Russia and America, and 14 other dungeons ranked S+ or above. There were 35 dungeons between A rank and S rank, which the government elites were trying to clear, and 167 dungeons ranked B or below, which various governments were scheming to turn into Field Dungeons.

Good. With just that, it was worth a try.

[Kiaaaaaa!]

[Kyaaaaaak!]

Standing in the middle of a long and straight pathway, I glanced at the front and back. Hundreds of Wraith Queens were screaming and flying toward me.

[Soul Guard became level 7. You develop a perfect resistance to almost all mental attacks. Your league of existence increases further. Weapons without mana can no longer hurt you.]

Ooh, just by being here, I can feel my Soul Guard's experience skyrocketing! However, I couldn't just stay here forever. The hasty Wraith Queens had already begun spitting out ectoplasm arrows.

I shot out a few crossbow bolts, shooting down the arrows I couldn't possibly avoid. Then, I lowered my center of gravity. Below my feet, light whirlpools appeared, sending me flying. After Peruta Circuit reached level 7, I became able to apply Peruta Circuit to a certain extent.

“Ha!”

Shooting forward forcefully, I slashed the Wraith Queen in front of me. Immediately afterward, I stepped on the ground, shooting up like a spring and activating a skill. It was Gale Track.

[Kiaaaaaa!]

“Third, fourth, fifth!”

Gluttony Spear beamed with golden Spirit Aura as it pierced through all enemies blocking its path. As Spear Technique leveled up, each attack drew out more damage. As a result, the Wraith Queens in Gale Track’s path died instantly when they were unlucky. Of course, once I killed ten Wraith Queens, adding 50% bonus damage to my attack, they all died instantly.

“Huaaaaaa!”

[Kyaaaa!]

[My... heart....!]

Peika was infused in my spear, while Ruyue stayed on the outside, hindering Wraith Queens’ movements and leading them so that I can kill them more easily. Peika’s ability focused on attacking, while Ruyue’s ability could be used in various ways.

“Every single one of you, come!”

[You used Provoke! All enemies in the area attack you with great hostility!]

[Kill that human!]

[Don't let him leave!]

[Make him our ally!]

[A male... ally... Wraith King?]

[Make him our ally!]

[Husband... I mean, ally!]

Huk! The Wraith Queens' eyes were flashing strangely! They were like the eyes Loretta sometimes had!

Using Gale Track, I charged through to where the gate was, shredding all Wraith Queens on my way. Once I was in front of the gate, I turned around, surging with great rotational force. The wind energy gathered on the tip of my spear, seemingly wanting to burst out at any moment. It traveled around my body, then gathered on the tip of my spear again.

I raised my spear. There were still about a hundred Wraith Queens left alive.

“Elemental Tempest!”

[It's a festival!]

[Wind, fan!]

[Super spin spin~!]

Elementals flew toward my spear, where wind energy spiraled around. With the addition of the elementals, the spear gave off a rainbow light. The explosive wind energy and power from the elementals caused my hand holding the spear to shake, but I firmly gripped my spear with a snort.

Then, I thrust it forward.

[Kyaaaaaaaa!]

With 50% of my mana instantly leaving my body, a sense of fatigue swept through my body. I stretched my foot back and prevented myself from falling. The Wraith Queens filling up the pathway died in mass, and I constantly heard messages that I obtained 3,000 gold.

“Hu, it's over.”

It was really over. Seeing the wide pathway completely empty, I was deeply moved. Now, I couldn't grind even if I wanted to.

Currently, my Spear Technique was level 9. This had happened almost two weeks ago. Still, I didn't know if the last two months of grinding would let me master my Spear Technique. Skill experience wasn't something I could calculate. However, I couldn't just stay here forever.

Even if I couldn't master high-ranked Spear Technique, it was fine. It didn't mean that the two months of training was meaningless. I grew more used to practical application of Peruta Circuit in battles, and I was confident I had reached great heights in my spearmanship. Soul Guard had reached level 7, and my Elementalist abilities also grew. That was enough.

“Alright then... let's go!”

With a sense of unease, I stepped beyond the gate. In that instant, several messages rang in my ear.

[You conquered Beyond's 3rd floor. You can challenge the dungeon's 54th floor.]

[Your maximum HP and MP increase by 2%. You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[Experience has been added to skills you frequently used to progress through Beyond's 3rd floor.]

[High-rank Martial Arts became level 5! Positive effects will be

added to all actions using your body!]

[Mid-rank Crossbow Marksmanship became level 8. You can shoot without aiming and hit your target's vital points.]

[You mastered low-rank Gale Track! The wind energy gathered for the final blow is amplified.]

[You learned mid-rank Gale Track! Every time an enemy is pushed away, your attack power increases by 7% up to 200%!]

[Mid-rank Dash became level 6! Positive effects will be added to all charge type skills!]

[Peruta Circuit became level 8! Even in fierce battles, you can circulate Peruta Circuit and recover mana like normal. At the same time, you can effectively attack and defend using the flow of mana.]

[Soul Guard became level 8! Your lofty league renders most mental attacks ineffective and reflects them back to their user. You will not be intimidated by enemies stronger than you, and as your existence becomes more complete, your resistance to dark mana increases greatly.]

[Overwhelm became level 2! Just by existing, you cause all enemies to tremble. It decreases all of your opponent's abilities by 10%. The chance of your opponent failing to activate a skill increases by 10%]

[High-rank Spirit Mastery became level 2. All souls connected to you obtained the possibility to leap past their souls' original potential.]

And.

[You mastered high-rank Spear Technique! When you're holding a spear, aura will form automatically. Even without a spear, you can create a spear using your aura. You greatly intimidate enemies with lower levels of weapon techniques. Your spear begins to sprout the potential to covet godhood.]

[Now, you must create your own Spear Technique. This path is long and arduous, and is bound to happen slowly. Do not get impatient. If you can seek help, it is recommended that you do so. Unique Spear Techniques that surpass high-rank Spear Technique are not created so easily.]

“Thank you for your concern, message noona.”

[...]

“But instead of worrying about that, first...”

Seeing Loretta widening her eyes, I grinned and waved my hand.

Then, I shouted inwardly.

‘Yes! I mastered Spear Technique! ‘

“Shin-nim, you finally came back!”

“Yeah, I obtained what I wanted.”

“What is it?”

“High-rank Spear Technique master.”

Loretta’s jaws dropped.

“Did... Did you just say master? A high-rank weapon technique?”

“Yes. Father seems to have mastered it too. Shouldn’t most Gold ranked explorers have it mastered?”

“Do you want come with me to the Residential Area and try shouting that out loud? I can promise you, people will start throwing stones at you within 30 seconds.”

“I worked hard for two months, you know.”

“Whew, I don’t know what to say to Shin-nim, but... I’m glad you’re back safe and sound.”

Because Loretta's gaze was making me feel slightly uncomfortable, I took a step back. Loretta's eyes quickly narrowed.

"This is our reunion after two months. Can't you be happier, Shin-nim?"

"I just have a lot to do. I'm going to be busy from now."

"..."

Loretta stared at me intently. Her golden eyes were so clear and bright that they seemed to be sucking out my soul.

"W-What's wrong, Loretta?"

"Shin-nim, with me..."

"With Loretta?"

Loretta's lips lightly budged. It seemed she was hesitating to say something.

"With me... No, nevermind. It's nothing. What am I saying... Huu, it's nothing. Shin-nim is doing well. I'm just feeling a bit uneasy."

“Can you say it so I can understand?”

“I meant Shin-nim should let me know when things get rough. Let me know even if things don’t. I can at least give Shin-nim a massage. Though, I’ll take proper compensation for it that’s not money, huhu...”

“I know you’re saying that because you’re worried about me, but I won’t ever ask Loretta for a massage.”

“Tsk.”

Loretta clicked her tongue. Then, she laughed lightly.

“This much should be fine. But Shin-nim, you can’t overwork yourself. When things get too tiring and difficult, you have to let me know. I’m saying this seriously, okay?”

“It’s not tiring and difficult at all, but sure, I will.”

Tiring and difficult? It seemed Loretta didn’t know me that well. As I headed to my mansion after saying goodbye, I thought, ‘I’ve never been more full of energy in my entire life! Strengthening my abilities, learning spearmanship! Reaching new heights I’ve never seen! These things were erasing the irritation I was feeling from everything!’

There was no one at the mansion. It seemed everyone was busy working. That was good. If possible, I didn’t want to be bothered.

I headed to the basement training room. Standing in the middle of the dark and spacious room, I closed my eyes.

“Deific Manifestation!”

It wasn't someone calling my name. It wasn't even me calling my own name.

[Using half of your mana and vitality, you manifest the Mythological Heroic Spirit, 'Peruta Rello Vatifoa,' for 37 minutes and 21 seconds.]

It was a call for the guide who would help me take a step forward.

Author's note:

Next chapter is the long awaited appearance of Peruta's Spear Technique! Look forward to it!

Chapter 145. What We Can Do (3)

[I had a feeling you'd call me soon.]

“Really?”

[Yes. Your mana was getting clearer. I knew you would soon reach the necessary realm.]

It sounded like I was a cultivator in a martial arts novel. Of course, Peruta was probably telling the truth.

“I learned a lot from you back in the Luka continent.”

[Huhu, it seems you realized something about Peruta Circuit. First, let's have a spar. I can pass my spear technique down afterward.]

“Sure.”

We didn't need to say much. I immediately closed my eyes, and Peruta created an Imagine World. We now had 37 hours to work with. Within this time, I had to learn Peruta's Spear Technique. Otherwise, I would have to wait another month.

Peruta Circuit was a method to bring the flow of mana toward its user. The spiraling mana sucked in external mana, and at the same time, strengthened the mana through rotational force. The

whirlpool of mana didn't just happen in the mana pathway but spread out through the entire body and the outside. A special flow occurs inside the mana whirlpool, which only the user can manipulate. Depending on how it's used, it can block an opponent's attack or strengthened one's attack.

“Ho, you already learned the practical application of it.”

“It can't be compared to your spearmanship though.”

A whirlpool completely matching the flow of Peruta Circuit circulated through the spear Peruta was holding. As each of his attacks were heavy, in order to block it, I had to use the same whirlpool in my attacks or pour my aura into the spear until the limit.

Of course, that was the past me. After the special training I went through, I could imbue aura into my spear and draw Peruta Circuit's whirlpool from it. Even so, the difference between mine and Peruta's was like heaven and earth.

“If it's the current you, you'll understand it naturally while we spar.”

“I hope so.”

“No, I can guarantee you. If you experience it for just 30 hours...”

As he raised his spear wrapped in a whirlpool, Peruta gave a

teasing smile. It was my own face, but I wanted to punch it! However, before I could charge toward him, he attacked me first.

I jumped to the side to dodge his spear which was slashing down vertically, then counterattacked. As expected, Peruta read my movements and struck my spear away with his spear swirling with a whirlpool.

“Oho, your dodging skills improved!”

“I just came back from a place where I’d die if I... didn’t!”

“But you’re still not there yet!”

Peruta’s spear was terrifyingly fast and powerful. His spear technique wasn’t just utilizing Peruta Circuit’s whirlpool. His spear’s movement and its trajectory were as free as the capricious wind. It’s methodical flow suddenly twisted and distorted, and if it caught me, it would swallow me like a raging tide. It was light, then heavy. It was calm, then violent. As someone facing it, it couldn’t be more annoying.

“You can do it. You already know the key!”

“I don’t... think so... at all...!”

Peruta’s comforting only gave me despair. Although we shared the same body, the realm of martial arts he embodied was far and lofty. He was called an ancient Martial God and a War God. Even

so, I...

BOOM!

“Good, you’re getting more natural!”

“No, not at all...! I’m only just starting!”

I will catch up to him! It’s not like I couldn’t see the difference between us before, and now, I knew the height in front of my eyes was a level I could reach!

By the time 10 hour passed, my white aura began to swirl around my spear in the shape of a whirlpool. The result of starting to show from repeatedly clashing with Peruta’s spear.

“You took your first step! Good, but are you satisfied with just that?”

“Of course not!”

His spearmanship wasn’t the only thing I had to catch up to. His movements as he wielded his spear, his spear flowing with his movements, his footwork, the Peruta Circuit’s mana erupting from his feet, the flow that amplified, converged, and released!

“You don’t need to try to follow my movements. Peruta Circuit is an unconstrained whirlpool. You just have to mix it however you

want.”

“Of course, I already... know that!”

The whirlpool enveloping my spear was fast and destructive. Although it wasn't as capricious as Peruta's nor was it as mysterious and elusive, it became stronger as it advanced and overwhelmed the enemy with its unpredictable destructive power! It was persistent and relentless!

Peruta Circuit's current became more and more powerful as it flowed. Even as it stumbled, it did not stop, and continuously and endlessly drew in mana. The pain it gave made me happy. I felt like I finally understood how to wield mana. What was left was to direct it, not just using my spear, but using my entire body!

[You learned the Unique Spear Technique, 'Peruta – Mad Typhoon.' Although it is based on Peruta Circuit, this Unique Spear Technique has been tempered by your martial path, which naturally manipulates its shocking flow of mana into speed and destructive force. You obtained 2 skill points. Current skill points: 10]

This message was heard 24 hours after the start of my sparring with Peruta. Although the way I enveloped my spiraling white aura around my spear was different than Peruta's method, I became able to clash with him without being pushed back. It seemed Peruta had also realized it, as his smile became deeper.

“Congratulations. You paved your own way forward.”

“I think it’s a bit too straightforward.”

“That’s just your character. Once your movement is added on top of it, not many will be able to dodge your spear.”

After finding out that I had learned my own Spear Technique, Peruta stopped. With a satisfied expression, he looked at me and my spear.

“For me to reach that realm, it took me 70 years in human time. This is only the start, so don’t become overconfident.”

“70 years...”

Even though Peruta spent 70 years to reach this height, he only considered it the start? As I thought, I had a lot to learn from his mindset.

After that, Peruta advised me about Peruta Circuit and spearmanship, then disappeared saying he’d see me in a month. Once I was left alone in the basement training room, I collapsed. Since I did 24 hours’ worth of movements in 24 minutes, it was only natural for fatigue to build up. I looked at the clock. It was 2 in the afternoon. I didn’t have the time to stay lying on the floor like this.

“Ruyue, wash me...”

[Okay!]

In an instant, ice enveloped my entire body, then disappeared. My body drenched in sweat was now clean. Along with the cleanliness, drowsiness naturally swept over me.

“Haaa... I shouldn’t...”

No. Go with the flow. Peruta seemed to be telling me so. I couldn’t go against master’s words, so I obediently went to sleep.

When I woke up, Sumire was in front of me.

“Huh?”

I blinked. Then, I realized I was using Sumire’s laps as pillows.

“Um, Sumire? What’s going on?”

“The floor is hard, Shin-nim. My laps are hard from muscles too, but I thought they were still better than the floor.”

“No, you don’t have to go so far... Well, thanks though.”

“Yes! You trained immediately after coming back from your training, I’m impressed!”

I got up. Sumire also got up slowly.

“Is everyone back?”

“Yes. Because Shin-nim is coming back today, we came back after clearing 3 Event Dungeons. I came down to practice spearmanship while we waited, but then I found Shin-nim here.”

“You should have woken me up... Do you want to lightly spar?”

“Yes!”

Sumire’s eyes sparkled. It seemed she was waiting for those exact words. Looking at Sumire grabbing her spear and taking her stance, I grinned. Then, I likewise grabbed my spear.

After the spar, Sumire reached mid-rank Spear Technique. This girl... was really a genius.

“Shin!”

“Yeah, I was expecting you.”

Ludia ran into my embrace the moment she saw me. I patted her back to calm her down and reported to the others that I was back. We could now talk about the things we needed to do.

“We’re at our limit. Even if the remaining Event Dungeon turn into Field Dungeons, the countries they’re in can manage them. They have tight security around their gates, preventing anyone from entering without their permission. There are 162 such dungeons.”

Hwaya explained as she gritted her teeth. I had already somewhat heard about it through the communication channel, but now that I heard the exact number, I could only sigh.

“How long did it take for the first wave of Event Dungeons to turn into Field Dungeons?”

“Two months, Shin-nim.”

Sumire answered quickly. Since the Event Dungeons appeared a month ago, while I was still in Beyond’s 3rd floor, we still had a month left.

“They won’t be open to discussions.”

Walker spoke as one corner of his mouth curled up. Seeing as how he was here, it seemed Yua was already home.

“Even though Mastiford specifically contacted the British government, they’re still trying to protect their gates.”

“The problem isn’t just that Event Dungeons would turn into Field Dungeons. The Event Dungeons might not get turned into Field Dungeons and have their bosses freed. That would be more of a headache...”

“Kang Shin, humans naturally delude themselves into thinking they can control everything. If there is a precedent, it is especially so. They’ll think they’re prepared and that there’s no need to worry about it. The result will almost always be disastrous.”

Walker had quite a twisted view on the world. Of course, with the way things were going, I couldn’t deny him. How annoying.

When I looked at Hwaya, she was frowning. Was it because Ludia was still in my embrace? Like a barnacle, she wouldn’t get off of me even when Ye-Eun and Shuna pulled on her.

“What’s up, Hwaya?”

“Guardian’s leaders are extremely forward in protecting the gates.”

“You can say it straight out. Brightman, right?”

“Yeah.”

I should’ve beaten that guy up earlier.

“It’s not just Brightman. Most SS rankers are helping to thoroughly protect their countries’ gates. So much so that it’s taking longer to clear dungeons ranked S+ or above.”

“Huu, I at least hoped that the ones who obtained their abilities through the dreams would be better...”

No, I couldn’t just stay here and sigh all day. I had to do what I could do.

“Let’s start with Korea. Is Korea also protecting its Event Dungeons?”

“Of the 18 Event Dungeons in Korea, the three Event Dungeons ranked D or below were instantly destroyed when they appeared, and Event Raids didn’t break out either. There are 4 dungeons ranked S or above, of which two are S rank and two are S+ rank. As you know, Korea doesn’t have any SS rankers and only a few S rankers. Because of that, they weren’t prioritized in the Guardian’s ordering. They probably won’t get cleared within the next month.”

“What about the others?”

“The list of the other 11 Event Dungeons are: 1 A+, 2 A, 1 B+, 3 B, 2 C+, and 2 C. The Korean government is also trying to protect the dungeons ranked B+ or below. The dungeons ranked higher than that can’t be cleared because of their lack of ability users. Once they enter, they can’t get out until they clear the dungeon, so they’re being careful about where to send their troops.”

After thinking for a bit, I came to a decision.

“I want to clean up Korea first. Is that okay?”

“Son, you know that the government is protecting the gates, right?”

“Yes, father, but I’ll do it forcefully. It’ll be fine. Our country is too weak to stop us.”

“I’m surprised you can say that as a Korean...”

But it’s true! Even if Korea’s 3 S rankers worked together, they won’t even be able to pierce through Sumire or Shuna’s defense!

“Let’s split into three teams. Hwaya, you go with Walker and Shuna.”

“Okay.”

“Father, go with Sumire and Ye-Eun.”

“Ooh, going on a stroll with my new daughter candidates doesn’t sound so bad.”

“I’ll go with Ludia.”

Ludia looked ready to burst into tears, so it was probably difficult to separate from her again. Plus, with her power of the earth for defense and healing ability, she was undoubtedly the best candidate to bring with me. Ah, Ludia's face lit up. How cute.

“The way I split the members is simple. I made it so that no one in Korea will be able to stop us. Even if Event Raids break out, we should be able to take care of them. Let's split the eleven low-ranked dungeons into three based on their distance and start. Don't openly reveal your identities. Equip something like Otus' Secret.”

“How pleasant. You're giving us orders right after coming back.”

“This is only the start, Walker. My goal is to completely sweep through all the Event Dungeons on Earth.”

“Regardless of people coming to stop us?”

“Who's going to stop us?”

With a grin, I retorted.

“No one can stop me now, Walker.”

Chapter 146. What We Can Do (4)

Ludia and I were in charge of Gangwon-do province, where the B, A, and A+ ranked dungeons were. As it was far from Seoul, it was the most efficient for me to go, as I could ride on Lotte, who was faster than fighter jets.

“But...”

After getting on Lotte’s back with me, Ludia muttered coldly. She pointed towards the girl wrapping her arms around my back with eyes shaped like stars. She wore a water-colored dress that was perfect for going on strolls.

“What’s this?”

“She’s Plene, a siren. She’s a companion of mine, like Lotte.”

[Hi! I’m Plene! Isn’t it a pretty name? Shin gave it to me!]

Plene smiled innocently and unwrapped her arms from me. She held her hand out to Ludia, but Ludia simply glared at her.

“I... I thought you were asking me on a date.”

“No, we’re going to a dungeon. What date?”

“You’re really a fool.”

“You’re the fool.”

[She’s a meanie! She won’t accept my greeting! Shin, scold her!]

“Ludia is normally a bit rude. Forgive her, Plene.”

“She even stole my spot. I hate her...!”

Plene was perfect to hold Ludia in check. Although it might be a bit cruel to Ludia, who I met in two months, I thought Ludia was using all sorts of excuses lately to be intimate with me!

I’m a man and Ludia a woman. It would be fine if were dating, but as we weren’t, sticking so close was troublesome. Both Hwaya and Ye-Eun were giving Ludia strange glares as well. I said I would take responsibility for Ludia’s dependence on me, but that didn’t mean I would marry her! If she became even more intimate than she currently was... my... Kuhum.

But what about now? Plene, who liked being intimate just as much as Ludia, held Ludia in check! As Ludia spends more time separated from me, she would realize she doesn’t need to always cling to me!

... But, strange. Why did I feel like nothing had changed other than that Plene replaced Ludia!?

In any case, we first decided to clear the B rank dungeon. This Event Dungeon had appeared in the middle of Gangwon-do's camping ground. I was shocked by how many Guardians were lined up and protecting it. With that number, they could just go in and clear it themselves!

The Guardians didn't see us in the sky. It was because Lotte was a cheaty wyvern that was even specialized in stealth. Her skills, 'Presence Concealment' and 'Invisibility', were hiding us perfectly! It was also the reason that I couldn't recognize her when we first met, even though she appeared right in front of my eyes.

"Shin, what are you going to do? Are you going to talk to them?"

Ludia asked as she raised her staff. Strange. Why do you look like you're in your combat mode rather than normal mode? Did you hit the spacebar twice by mistake?

Although I was dumbfounded, I would be troubled if she shouted, 'O Earth!', so I quickly answered her.

"No, we're going to sing."

"Sing?"

Ludia tilted her head. Soon, she looked at Plene, clearly thinking, 'Is it her?'

When I eyed Plene, she nodded with a shy smile. Then, she began

to sing.

“Lalala~”

“Mm? Where is this sound coming from?”

“What a beautiful voice.”

“Idiots, it might be a monster’s attack. Stay on your...”

With Plene’s voice ringing from the sky, the Guardians began to collapse one by one, starting from the one admonishing the others to stay alert. After becoming my subordinate, Plene’s singing ability was increasing the more she practiced. In essence, it was being treated like a skill by the dungeon’s system. As she continued singing ever since we met, her ability, which even affected S rankers, had grown much stronger. Even magic type Awakened with innate resistance against mental attacks would find it difficult to resist Plene’s singing.

“This song, how beautiful...”

“To us, it’s just a beautiful song, but to them...”

To them, a special effect would be added. One that helps them fall asleep in just 10 seconds.

Just by singing for 30 seconds, Plene made all nearby ability users

drop their weapons and fall asleep. When they woke up, they would find themselves relieved of fatigue. If you're suffering from insomnia, I recommend you get a siren! They would be super popular. Thinking rather useless things, I lightly tapped Plene's shoulder.

“Lalala~ Mm? Why?”

“You can stop singing now, Plene.”

“But I want to finish this song...”

“You can sing later. I'll listen to the full song then.”

“Okay!”

Just in case an Event Raid breaks out after we cleared the dungeon, we moved the ability users elsewhere. Shortly afterward, we were the only ones around the gate.

“What an unbelievable ability.”

“Plene, Ludia is complimenting you.”

“Really? Thank you! I like you!”

“N-No! That wasn't a compliment!”

As always, it was too easy to earn points with Plene. Listening to them bickering behind me, I grinned and ordered Lotte.

“Charge into the gate.”

[Understood, Hero!]

Lotte flapped her wings once and swiftly flew into the gate.

Our surroundings warped and the Event Dungeon appeared. It was an open grassland with deer running around playfully. They had turquoise skin and were three times as large as normal deer. On each of their foreheads was a spiral-shaped horn, and their feet hooves were shaped like scissors. If not for these characteristics, the entire view would have looked extremely peaceful.

“Deer meat doesn’t even taste good... damn it.”

“You were thinking about eating them!?”

Plene performed outstandingly even inside the dungeon. By changing her tune, she could apply various status effects. Currently, she was using the status effect sirens were known for. Right, her singing was luring its listeners toward her like mindless zombies. Whether the deer were grazing on the grass or having mixed martial arts fights, they turned their attention to Plene’s singing. They stopped what they were doing and walked across the grassland toward us. As Plene continued singing, we flew around

the grassland on Lotte's back.

“Shin? What are you doing?”

“Can't you see? I'm collecting the deer together.”

“Lalala~!”

Around the time I could confidently say that we looked around the entire Event Dungeon, there was a gigantic herd of deer following us.

“Kraaa...”

“Krrrrrr...”

In the past, I wanted to hunt monsters the moment I saw them. Now, weak monsters couldn't draw out my fighting spirit in the slightest. I was glad that I brought Plene along.

“Do we need to hunt all the monsters before the boss appears? How was it in the other dungeons, Ludia?”

“I think it's based on how many monsters you encountered, not how many you defeated. Since all you need to do is find monsters, it should be appearing any time soon... Ah, it's here!”

[Kuooooooooo...!]

[Kiladeer Grassland's boss monster, 'Iron Kiladeer,' has appeared! Defeating the Iron Kiladeer and clearing the Event Dungeon will grant special rewards!]

At the same time the boss appeared, I finally found out what these monsters were called. Kiladeer! As for the boss, just its body was over 3 meters tall, while its legs were made out of steel! Its large, thick horn looked like it would be a good decoration. That said, why did all animal type boss monsters appear as metallicized versions!? I carefully raised my spear.

“Heroic Strike!”

[You defeated the Event Dungeon boss monster, Kiladeer!]

[30,000 gold is distributed evenly amongst party members. You received 15,000 gold.]

[Kang Shin-nim's contribution is the highest. Choose your reward.]

[1. Iron Kiladeer's Horn Sword

2. Iron Kiladeer's Antler]

Of course, kiladeers didn't disappear just by killing the boss. First, I selected Iron Kiladeer's Horn Sword and fed it to Gluttony Spear (it didn't even grow by 0.3%). Then, I swiftly took care of the kiladeer with a single Elemental Tempest. Meanwhile, Ludia...

"Ludia, what's that?"

"Antler."

"... What are you doing?"

"Pulverizing it."

"For what...?"

"To make Shin eat it."

Ludia's devotion toward me was truly admirable. Antlers were indeed good for the body, so I was thankful[2. Western scientists disagree.]. That aside, it seemed I needed to question mother. Just what was she teaching Ludia!?

[You completely cleared an B rank Event Dungeon! All party members received 1 bonus stat!]

[You will now return.]

We cleared the other two Event Dungeons, but no Event Raid broke out. Altogether, we receive 4 bonus stats. Clearing the A+ rank dungeon only gave 2 bonus stat. It was most likely because I had long surpassed its standard.

[We're done. How about you guys?]

[We're still on our second one.]

[We're also on our second, son. How are you done so quickly?]

[Do you want to know, father?]

[No, it's fine. You should go ahead and clear the other dungeons.]

After checking the news through my phone, I leisurely cleared the other two dungeons. The Korean government had found out that we were destroying the Event Dungeons and sent additional forces to uncleared Event Dungeons. They even criticized us through the media. In any case, their actions didn't stop me in the slightest. Plene simply put everyone to sleep, and we cleared the dungeons. afterward, news began to spread that unidentified assailants with malicious intent were going around invading Korea's gates.

“Although Guardians are guarding the gates, in truth, they have no right to prevent us from clearing the Event Dungeons.”

Although there were laws regarding Event Dungeons, as long as the dungeons and the potential Event Raids could be dealt with, neither the government nor the Guardian could say anything about it. After all, the gates appeared on their own. They did not belong to anyone.

In any case, the news claimed that we were terrorists trying to release monsters into Korea by clearing Event Dungeons and making Event Raids break out. If that were true, the Guardian undoubtedly had the right to step in.

Hey, who knew being a terrorist was so hard?

[They were confirmed to be the same group of people, who were actively destroying various countries' gates within the past month. This group, known to be led by the SS ranker Hwaya Mastiford, has...]

[Breaking news. A picture has been taken of a group of people riding on a wyvern. The man on top is suspected to be the Dragon Knight, who recently made headlines with his accomplishment in America. His current goal seems to match that of Hwaya Mastiford.]

[Why could they be doing this? Some say that they are destroying Korea's gates for the same reason that they destroyed the other gates within the past month.]

[The government has heavily deployed Guardians to the

uncleared ga... Ah! We just received the report that all gates other than the four S or S+ ranked gates have been destroyed!]

I couldn't say it was pleasant, as they made it sound like I was a criminal. Of course, I could understand where they were coming from. They must be thinking, 'Why us!?' If I could, I would tell them.

Don't worry, the same will happen to all the other countries!

I headed to Seoul on Lotte, where we promised to meet. The other two teams were heading over as well. We were purposefully being conspicuous. That was more convenient. I didn't want to have to explain twice.

"Yep, looking good. I'm sure Shin will shine even in front of the camera."

"Shin is cool!"

"I don't need the flattery. Thank you though."

For the past month, although I wasn't there, Guild Revival had gotten rid of Event Dungeons. Their accomplishment would help make my announcement incredibly powerful. Thanks to them, I was ready to step in front of everyone.

It was the time for Revival to step up to the world stage. Not as everyone's ally, but as a strange group that mastered the Provoke

skill.

‘Ciara, you wanted to me to lead the world’s ability users, but the method I chose is different. It’s going to annoy you, ha!’

Author’s note:

I’m not saying this just because I put a Mabinogi reference this chapter, but I heard they made a Mabinogi Café near Sadang Station’s 11th exit.

I. Want. To. Go!

Damn it, from 6th grade to the second year of high school, I poured in my youth to Mabinogi! Mabinogi Café, a Mabinogi Café! I want to go!!

That’s enough of my tantrum.

Chapter 147. What We Can Do (5)

It only took Lotte a few minutes to get from Gangwon-do to Seoul. When we arrived at the café we promised to meet, the guild members were all waiting around a big table.

... Furthermore, there was a circle of cameramen and Guardians surrounding them from a distance. Even the outside of the café was crowded with them. I nonchalantly walked into the café. The ones with power should be inside.

“You’re here?”

“Yeah. Are you guys done warming up?”

“Son, get these things away. They’re bothering me.”

Because of the conversation we just had and the wyvern sitting outside the café, everyone turned their attention toward me. Just from a glance, it seemed all three of Korea’s S rankers were in this café!

“Are you really the Dragon Knight?”

“Dragon Knight, why are you destroying Korea’s gates?”

“Dragon Knight, are you really Korean?”

I raised my hand and lightly waved across the air. A small whirlpool appeared and pushed them back. Of course, the S rankers didn't get pushed back from just this, but I didn't care.

I brought my hand up to Otus' Secret. Then I changed my hair and eye colors. My eyes became black like it normally was, and my hair became grafy.

It was Yeon Hwawoo's appearance.

"Ah, you are!"

"Yeon Hwawoo, Korea's fourth S ranker!"

"Right, I'm Yeon Hwawoo. Just like you said, I'm also the Dragon Knight."

I replied calmly. Whistles rang and sighs were heard.

"Korea also had an SS ranker!"

"Why did you keep your identity hidden!?"

"What is your relationship with the Flame Witch, Hwaya Mastifo... Kuk!"

I decided to ignore the reporter that disappeared with a scream.

Although we were in a café, there were so many cameras that it was no different than a press conference. It simply meant that a lot of people were interested in us. Of course, I suspected that over half of them were angry at us, but when I glanced at Hwaya, she nodded and messaged me.

[It will spread to the whole world. I already confirmed it.]

[Thanks for giving me the spotlight, Hwaya.]

[I'm the one who should be thankful, Shin.]

I opened my mouth, looking at the people eyeing me.

“It is because I wasn't an SS ranker until just recently. Furthermore, I had no intention of joining Guardian or Freedom Wing.”

“Are you saying the power of S ranker you showed as Yeon Hwawoo was real?”

“That's right.”

Then, a man in his prime stepped forward. He was one of Korea's S rankers and a close-ranged type attacker. The man, who I couldn't remember the name of, asked.

“Do you still have no intention of joining Korea’s Guardian now that you have become an SS ranker?”

“No. I believe I found my own place.”

“Then why are you disturbing public order?”

People looked flustered by the S ranker suddenly diving into the core problem. I could see why. No matter how valuable Field Dungeons were, a single SS ranker was still much more valuable. Now that the truth that I was Korean was revealed, Korea’s Guardian would be better off coaxing me to join them. In any case, I was thankful for his to-the-point question. I didn’t want to talk to them for long.

“I want to ask why you think it is disturbing public order.”

“Woo, Woo Youngha-ssi, you shouldn’t...”

The S ranker, Woo Youngha, ignored the Guardian trying to stop him and shouted.

“If this isn’t disturbing public order, then what is!? I do not obtain monster remains or Mana Stones by hunting such weak monsters. However, I know how important those things are to Korea’s economy. Why is a Korean ranker trying to screw us over?”

“When gates naturally disappear after a certain period of time,

Field Dungeons might appear like in America or Britain, but there's also a chance for strong monsters, like the one I fought before, to appear.”

“That is something we should control. It is absurd to destroy all gates because of such a small risk. Furthermore, monsters might appear even when you break the gates!”

“Hm, it seems you do not know what my companions did for the past month.”

“ ... ”

For the past month, Guild Revival had destroyed Event Dungeons and cleared potential Event Raids without any outsider being hurt. With how famous the story was, there was no one who hadn't heard of it.

“Is that really it? You're destroying the gates to prevent uncontrollably strong monsters from running amok?”

“What are you talking about? It's also to prevent Field Dungeons from appearing.”

“Why is that, Dragon Knight?”

The reporters jumped in once again. I replied to them with a question of my own.

“Do you think this will be the last time that gates will appear?”

“ ... ”

“When gates appear again, will you protect the low-ranked gates again to turn them into dungeons?”

“Of course not. We will only maintain a manageable number!”

“Who said the number of gates that will appear will be within your control? Once they escape your control even once, it is all over. The number of dungeons on Earth will only increase, and humans’ territory will disappear.”

“That’s why we should create dungeons now! To control that exact situation! Dungeons give everything an Awakened needs!”

“Don’t bullshit me. Even before the gates appeared, the Awakened were free to earn money and buy equipment they wanted. Furthermore, the equipment that can come from dungeons you can manage is easy to see, so you’re still saying that? If Guardian manages the dungeons, do you think they will invest the money they earn into all Awakened?”

Looking at Woo Youngha, I continued.

“It will be too late if we don’t start getting rid of them now.

Monsters did not emerge for the prosperity of humans. They are invaders trying to chase us out and replace us. This, I can guarantee. Even if we don't increase the number of monsters by leaving the gates alone, there are still countless monsters threatening our land. You should have caught a glimpse of that through the monster called Flame Drake."

Woo Youngha's eyes shook. I see, so he was there. No, he wasn't there while we were fighting the Flame Drake. Did he run away? In any case, he shut his mouth. I continued, not just to him, but to everyone watching.

"In terms of ability, we are confident that we are second to none. You should think carefully about why we are destroying the gates when we have nothing to gain from them."

"Isn't it to prevent other Awakened from getting stronger?"

"If we didn't act and let you all do as you wanted, they would get eaten by the monsters before they could get stronger."

"Why Korea?"

"I'm Korean, and I also grew up in Korea. Shouldn't I protect my country first?"

Then, I lightly smiled.

"But I don't understand why you're limiting us to just Korea."

My words made them freeze for a second.

“You mean...”

“Danger doesn’t go away just because all of Korea’s gates disappear. My companions spent the past month destroying the gates of weak countries. Do you not understand what this means?”

“You’re thinking of destroying other countries’ gates too!?”

“Dragon Knight, you are Korea’s ranker! As a ranker, if you break the laws of other countries, you will also bring harm to Korea!”

As a Korean, there was a clear difference between clearing Korea’s Event Dungeons and other countries’ Event Dungeons. The former could be justified, while the latter was a crime. At least, that’s what the reporters were saying. It was laughable.

“I won’t trouble countries that plan on destroying their gates on their own. But I will not allow countries to selfishly turn gates into dungeons.”

“What you are saying is a crime!”

“That’s fine. If any country dares to regard my actions as representative of Korea, I will make sure they come to regret it. Then, Korea will not receive much backlash.”

“M-My god...!”

I was done joking. It was now time to say what I came to say.

“Hwaya.”

“Yeah.”

What I took from Hwaya was a piece of paper recording all the locations of Event Dungeons ranked S or above. I was still surprised four of them had been in Korea, but that wasn't the important thing right now.

“In the past, it took two months before the gates turned into dungeons. If the gates all take the same amount of time, we have exactly one month left.”

“R-Right.”

“I heard that Guardian, Freedom Wing, and some rogues were trying to destroy these S rank dungeons. In truth, other than the fact that everyone is trying to ignore dungeons ranked A or below, I think it is an excellent plan.”

“The Guardian headquarters and we also agree. For that, we—”

I cut him off and continued.

“And in the past month, exactly 12 gates were destroyed. They were all S rank dungeons, and in the process, over 40 rankers got killed or injured. Plus, not once did more than 3 SS rankers come together.”

“Getting the project started was a pain. However, from now on, the number of injured or deceased should decrease, while the number of destroyed gates should increase.”

“You mean you can destroy 34 remaining gates until the next month?”

I grinned. Everyone should have understood already.

That it was impossible.

“Where will you give up and where will you save? I can guarantee that you will waste more time deciding that, and let more gates become dungeons. Can you confidently say that won’t be the case?”

“ ... ”

“Neglecting the gates that you should be able to destroy for profit, while neglecting the gates you must destroy because you can’t come to a consensus, because of conflict of interest, because of lack of ability... When the day comes where there are more monsters than humans on Earth, I wonder if you can still say we

are disturbing public order.”

I announced.

“We are Guild Revival. Our members aren’t too different from the rest of you. Heavy and cumbersome things like humanity or nation have been put aside. We gathered to first protect our friends and family.”

“Guild Revival.”

“He said Revival.”

“I heard of Team Revival before.”

Ignoring their murmuring, I continued, declaring my intention to all those listening from beyond the camera.

“We will take care of all of the gates in Korea, starting with the two S+ rank gates and S rank gates. After that, you should have no doubt about our abilities. We can talk again then. All of you must compensate us for helping to destroy other countries’ S rank or above gates.”

If you wanted something, you have to pay for it. Give and take. It was the most basic principle that even children understood.

Between safety and resources, what would they choose? To be

honest, it didn't matter how they reacted, so I maintained my nonchalant expression. Why?

It was obvious. We would destroy all Event Dungeons regardless! This was just a proclamation. To tell them to crawl on their own!

I had no intention of letting even a single Event Dungeon escape. I would protect Earth, obtain stats, piss off Guardian, Freedom Wing, and Ciara, and get rewards from bosses! There was nothing so full of benefits! I already missed a month's worth of Event Dungeons to train, so I couldn't possibly miss any more!

"I hope everyone will watch over us. We will show you the power and will of Guild Revival."

With a composed expression, yet eager eyes, I glared at each of the cameras and shouted inwardly.

'Just you wait, Event Dungeon! I'm coming around to sweep you up!'

Author's note:

My, I took the whole chapter just talking (looking at a far away mountain)

I hope it wasn't too lengthy. It was pretty important so I put some spirit into it... T.T I hope you're happy with it.

Chapter 148. What We Can Do (6)

After my one-sided proclamation ended, we left the café and jumped on Lotte's back. When I first tamed her, she refused to let others ride on her, but after getting used to the guild members and getting more familiar with me, she allowed this much.

“I will go too. It looks like the Guardian headquarter won't approve of you, but I want to see with my own eyes the skills you are so confident of.”

A young woman popped out from the crowd and asked to join us. She was another one of Korea's S rankers... But, of course, I couldn't remember her name. Feeling her glare, I nodded.

“Sure. You can follow us if you can.”

“Huh?”

“Our Lotte won't let non-guild members ride her, you see.”

[If you asked me to let that whore ride on me, I would have eaten her whole.]

Lotte muttered. I scratched her neck to calm her down and shouted.

“Let's go!”

“W-Wait! Yeon Hwawoo-ssi, Yeon Hwawoo-ssi!”

Lotte flapped her wings. Not even the S rankers could resist the wind pressure. Lotte kicked off the ground and leaped up. The concrete ground crumbled, but Lotte was already flying.

“Wait, Yeon Hwawoo-ssi! I said, take me with you!”

“My god.”

She was a wind ability user!? That S ranker flew slightly slower than Lotte as she shouted at the top of her lungs. Plene, who was still stuck to my back, complained.

“I don’t like that woman’s voice.”

“Now women are going after him even though he’s wearing a mask. What do we do about this man? Should we just wrap his head around with a boxing tape?”

“That’s it!”

“Don’t turn me into a mummy!”

[I’m going to go faster.]

“Sure, Lotte.”

[Mm.]

When Lotte raised her speed, the woman fell behind for a moment, but soon, she sped up and continued to follow us. Looking at her, I realized she was holding the hands of the other two S rankers. I could see Woo Youngha’s pale face clearly, as she grabbed him by his neck like she would to a cat. Seeing me show interest in the rankers, Hwaya introduced them.

“They’re all in Guardian, which is why A+ rank is the highest in Korea’s Freedom Wing.”

“You really know everything, Hwaya.”

“N-Not everything. I just know what I have to... You need to know your enemy so you can prepare for them.”

“Enemy, huh... It sure is getting crazy, damn it.”

“Humans biggest enemy is themselves, Kang Shin. You should have felt it in Britain. If you think everyone will come to your side after listening to you, you’ll only be badly hurt.”

Walker said with a snort. Seeing him crossing his arms and gazing at the clouds, I felt that he looked a bit lonely. Then, I considered why he said that. Was he... worrying about me?

I muttered.

“... Are you actually a good guy?”

“That’s disgusting. Screw off.”

I was certain Walker was changing. Perhaps one day, quicker than I would have thought, the contract might become unnecessary.

“The important thing is that we’re doing the right thing, son. Event Raids that break out when you least expect it, and Field Dungeons that resets a few months after being cleared. Didn’t you experience them both with your own body? Event Dungeons cause too much harm. No matter how big the potential gain is, our work must continue.”

“Of course, father. I won’t hesitate. I already made up my mind a month ago. Plus, I knew from the very beginning that what we were doing was right.”

I lightly smiled and retorted. I wasn’t troubled about that at all. What I did today... although I couldn’t be sure, I felt like it would go the way I wanted.

Our first target was the S+ rank Event Dungeon. Coincidentally, it appeared in Yeungdeungpo. I was surprised Hwaya lasted until today with how stressed out she must have been.

“Really, I’m going to have to tell Mom to move. Shin, is there a house up for sale near yours?”

“Sorry, but my mother will jump for joy, so please don’t.”

This time, the Event Dungeon appeared in the middle of a park. The park, of course, became off limits, and countless Guardian forces were protecting it. It was to prevent meaningless deaths.

“It’s Dragon Knight!”

“His wyvern sure is huge!”

“I-Is he really trying to enter this gate? Isn’t he crazy?”

Lotte flapped her wings midair and glared at the gate. Frightened by Lotte, they panicked.

“Do not enter! This place is under Guardian’s jurisdiction and is not open to the public! If you want to enter, you must form a party and get approved by the government!”

“I see!”

I politely responded to the voice coming from below.

“But I don’t care!”

Lotte immediately charged into the gate.

[You entered the S+ rank Event Dungeon, Forest of Rage.]

“It’s another forest.”

“Don’t tell me there are more spiders...?”

“So this place is...”

“We came in...”

Eh? I turned around at the unfamiliar voices. Lo and behold, Korea’s three S rankers were there! I didn’t think they’d really follow us into the gate!

“I can’t believe you went ahead without caring about us... It was hard catching up to you!”

“Uh... Good job, but you know this place is an S+ ranked dungeon, right?”

“Ah, now that you mention it!”

There were no S+ rank Awakened in Korea. These three were all S rank Awakened. I wondered what gave them the confidence to march into this dungeon. At that moment, a roar rang out across the entire dungeon.

[Kuaaaaaang!]

The S rankers became stiff. For the record, Walker also went stiff.

“Damn it, if I die here, I’ll reveal your evil deeds in my will, Kuuk!”

“You won’t die, so don’t worry, Walker.”

I grinned and took out my spear. Although Yeon Hwawoo was known to use his fists, he was just revealed to be the same person as Dragon Knight, who already fought against the drake with a spear. As such, it didn’t matter even if I used a spear.

Spinning the spear in my hand, I dispersed my mana into the surroundings. Then, I stopped not long after.

“I found it.”

At the same time, a great breaking sound rang out from the forest.

[Hero! I can feel the Hero's presence!]

“Everyone, get down and prepare. 11 o'clock, 5 meters tall. It's charging straight at us. It looks like a close-ranged type, but a part of its body has mana clumped together, so it might be hiding a trump card.”

I concisely explained the information I gathered from mana detection, then began circulating Peruta Circuit. Ludia spread her arms out and cast Blessing on the party members. In an instant, the whirlpool around my spear became stronger.

With a boom, the trees in front of us fell and it made its appearance. As I said before, it was 5 meters tall. Although it was shaped like a human, its skin was green and unnaturally muscular, while it had only one eye.

“Cyclops!”

[Hero, I will have the Herooo, kyakuk!]

The Gluttony Spear I threw out easily turned the cyclops' head to dust. I hadn't even used Heroic Strike, so it really died in vain. I retrieved the Gluttony Spear by pulling on its mana and spoke to my companions.

“I'll support you guys from above. They shouldn't be that hard from what I see.”

“Not that hard!? They weaken others by casting the fear status effect!”

“Honestly, you should block something like fearing.”

“Y-You...!”

Leaving the raging Walker be, I ordered Plene.”

“When the cyclopes appear, sing your weakening song, okay?”

“Un, okay! The song where we all have fun together, right!?”

“Y-Yeah.”

“Wait, Dragon Knight! What should we do?”

She’s asking me? What a smart woman!

“I won’t tell you to fight, but since you decided to observe us, do it while you run away.”

“Y-You want us to run?”

“Lotte, let’s go!”

With just me on her back, Lotte flew up. Although the rankers probably wanted to ride on Lotte, I didn't even turn around as I flew forward. If I could fly in the dungeon, I was clearly better off fighting on Lotte. If I got into a serious fight on Lotte, not only would they vomit and get motion sickness, but they would also get thrown off.

[What will you do, Hero?]

“My guild members are strong. They should be able to take on two of them at once.”

[Then we should find groups of three or more.]

“Exactly.”

Lotte raised her flying speed. This dungeon was contained the one-eyed giants, cyclopes. Befitting the title of S+ rank, they had powerful strength, resistance against mana, and ability to weaken magic and aura. However, Mad Typhoon was greatly effective against such special traits.

The endlessly spinning whirlpool of aura broke down their resistance and dealt special blows that were impossible to regenerate from. Peruta, who created this, was indeed worthy of being called a god.

[Kuaaaaang!]

“Gale Track!”

[Kraaaaaaaa!]

Lotte roared and charged. No matter how big the cyclopes were, Dark Wing Lotte was the biggest and strongest of all wyverns. Not even the cyclopes could block her charge. Imbued with a gale, the Gluttony Spear pierced through the cyclopes. The trees in Lotte’s path all fell and marked our track.

“Lotte, go there, where five of the mare gathered! I’m using the final blow!”

[Understood, Hero!]

After sending twenty cyclopes flying, a strong wind energy gathered around the Gluttony Spear, which had been strengthened by 140%. Even as Lotte charged forward, the energy flowing in from all sides transferred to the whirlpool of aura. The whirlpool almost looked like it was enveloping both Lotte and me.

“Peika!”

[Yeah!]

Looking at the cyclopes that got up from their rest and prepared to throw trees at us, I shouted my elemental’s name. Peika

instantly gathered golden lightning to the tip of my spear. It was a Thunder Bomb, which had all of her power concentrated.

“Thunder Tempest!”

Unable to hold in my excitement, I shouted out the skill name. Immediately afterwards, I strongly clashed with the group of cyclopes. The force of the whirlpool mixed with the lightning and a violent explosion broke out.

[Kiaaaaa...!]

[It was... the Hero...!]

The cyclopes standing in the front instantly died, and the ones behind them were also swept away by the explosion. Although the ground tremored loudly from their collapse, they were like music to my ears.

I had become strong. Even an S+ rank dungeon was a playground for me. Delighted, I made a big smile, when suddenly...

“What are we supposed to do if you kill them all? We’re practically just spectators!”

Hwaya’s voice rang out from far away. When I turned around, there were cyclopes in the path Lotte and I crossed. After using Gale Track, I had killed all the cyclopes I could see, so I forgot to leave some for the others.

[S-Sorry. I went a bit too wild.]

[No, you did well. It's better the more overwhelming you appear to them. You were cool.]

[Scary basta... Kuuk!]

Contrary to what she just shouted, Hwaya had a very satisfied tone in the guild communication channel. Although I hadn't planned on it, I had ended up showing the S rankers an effective show of force.

Of course, not all cyclopes were dead. Other than the five cyclopes that ate the brunt of my final blow, others were collapsed on the ground with their limbs or chunks of their bodies torn apart. I then traced Gale Track's path and took care of the cyclopes left alive.

"D-Dragon Knight..."

"He killed these monstrous creatures in one blow..."

"Kuk."

After joining the others, I couldn't help but laugh, seeing the three rankers' change in expression. Although they were the only ones with that expression, once we finished cleaning up Korea's

dungeons...

[Kuaaaa!]

[Kill the Heroooo!]

Because of the ruckus I caused, more and more cyclopes were gathering. I spun my spear around again as I turned around.

“Alright, let’s finish within 3 hours. I want to get rid of the other three before the day breaks.”

“Taking care of Korea in just one night. ...That sounds fun!”

Father grinned.

“Damn, you know, I have to guard your sister tomorrow, too...”

“Do your best, Walker!”

“You devil! Kuaak!”

Walker screamed. Startled, the S rankers backed off from Walker.

I slightly pitied Walker, but only just a little.

Chapter 149. What We Can Do (7)

For the past month, my companions had joined hands to clear all sorts of Event Dungeons. Although those dungeons were below A rank, I didn't feel that the time was wasted. They had gotten more accustomed to fighting with each other.

“Ha!”

With a spirited shout, father thrust his spear forward. A chunk of a cyclops' leg blew up, making it fall on top of two of its friends. Of course, incapacitating the two of them didn't do much to help the current situation. Ever since a while ago, piles of cyclopes were coming at us.

“Just one of them is annoying enough. Where are they all coming from?”

“It's all thanks to our cute leader. They must have realized that they have no chance of winning unless they all joined forces.”

Hwaya leisurely retorted, reaching her hand out and burning the cyclopes in that direction. Sumire and Shuna were blocking the cyclopes from the front, while Hwaya burned them with long-ranged attacks. As for us close-ranged attackers, we ran around killing incoming cyclopes on our own. One thing for sure, we had too many close-ranged attackers compared to the one long-ranged attacker we had.

“Shin-nim, help the right side!”

“Got it.”

Responding to Sumire’s call, I kicked off the ground, while a whirlpool surged around my spear using Peruta Circuit. The two cyclopes attacking Sumire were sent flying by the spear I thrust out.

“Plene!”

“Lalala~!”

When five new cyclopes appeared, Plene began to sing energetically. Every time she sang with a delightful expression, it looked like strength were leaving the cyclopes’ bodies.

“Kuk, I’m losing strength...”

“Damn... it...”

The S rankers, who weren’t considered to be in our party, were also affected, but it was fine since they didn’t need to fight. Without caring about them, I continued hunting.

“Lotte!”

[I know!]

As I decided to fight with the party members on the ground, Lotte and I were moving separately. Lotte harassed the cyclopes while freely flying in the sky. The black flames she breathed out could heavily injure them, and even cast curses.

[Kuaaaa! A bird with wings keeps blocking us!]

[That bird is a harmful bird!]

The cyclopes tried to attack Lotte, but without any long-ranged attacks, it was impossible. As Lotte also knew this, she jumped in and out, drawing as much of their aggro as possible. Meanwhile, we used the openings she created to attack them.

“Eit! Eit! Die!”

Ye-Eun made cute shouts as she tenaciously focused on the cyclopes weak points. In her hands were one black and one white pair of daggers, the reward she got from the Flame Drake raid. Her shouts and expression didn't match at all, so I wished she'd stop.

“What are we doing with their corpses?”

Hwaya asked, as she endlessly generated flames to burn the cyclopes. She gave me a small wink. Although we already talked about it, it seemed she said it for the S rankers to hear. I also replied casually.

“We’ll sell them. I’m sure many people will want S+ rank monster corpses. Ah, we’ll keep a few as souvenir... I wonder if they taste any good.”

[Ku, Kuooooooooo!]

[T-The Hero is scary!]

After hundreds of cyclopes died, the situation changed, as black cyclopes began to appear. These cyclopes were bigger than the normal ones and were holding gigantic clubs in their hands. Since Hwaya’s flames couldn’t easily burn them, it seemed they also had higher resistance to elements.

“The boss is going to appear soon, Hwaya!”

“If you’re tired, fall back to the defense line and rest until the boss comes!”

Hwaya shouted in response to my words and shot out white flames at all sides. It was a powerful attack, which made all of the cyclopes step back. Walker immediately ran to the back. It seemed father was tired from the constant fighting, as he also ran back after Walker.

“Huk huk, damn it, my attacks are barely effective...!”

[Walker, if you keep it up, you’ll get stronger from the stat bonuses.]

“If you didn’t force me into being your sister’s bodyguard, I would have been much stronger right now!”

“Walker, you have to seize the opportunity when it arrives!”

“Like I said, you prevented me from doing that!”

Although I wanted to talk to him in the guild communication channel, it seemed Walker didn’t want to. It probably didn’t matter, since the S rankers were too focused on what was happening in front of them that they didn’t pay attention to our conversation. I became seriously sorry for Walker. I hoped to reward him soon!

Chatting with Walker was fun, but it was about time to clean up the battlefield and prepare for the boss. First, I took out a highest-grade Mana Potion and put it in my mouth. I fixed my grip on my spear, bending down and leaping up.

“Shuna, Sumire! Get back!”

“Yes!”

“Shin-nim!?”

After instantly jumping over 10 meters in the air, I pulled my spear back and activated Peruta Circuit to its limit. A five-colored

light then began to gather in my spear.

[Kyak! One-eyed giants!]

[Are you teaching them a lesson? Prince-nim, are you teaching them a lesson?]

[I can ride this! Strangely, I'm fine!]

[Everyone come, it's a special spin spin!]

Countless elementals caused the whirlpool enveloping Gluttony Spear to take a rainbow hue. In the short moment where I stayed in the air, I thrust my spear toward the incoming cyclopes and shouted.

“Die!”

‘Damn, I wonder when I’m going to fix my habit of shouting.’

[Critical Hit!]

From the sky to the ground, a violent elemental storm raged. The black cyclopes in the front were quickly swept through, as were the cyclopes behind them. Although not all of them were dead, they were incapacitated.

“Hwaya, let’s clean up!”

“Y-Yeah!”

Hwaya, who was blankly staring at me for a moment, snapped out of her daze and began to quickly kill the cyclopes that managed to survive. She simply threw her white flames into their throat. If there was no response, they were dead. Otherwise, they choked on it and died. It was quite convenient.

After landing, I drank the Mana Potion I put in my mouth. After Elemental Tempest ended, countless elementals scattered, giving me blessings and blowing me kisses. I couldn’t help but smile. I had heard that I would be able to see the elementals I wasn’t connected to as I grew as an Elementalist. It seemed that was true. Although they were still a bit hazy, I could somewhat recognize them.

“Y-Yeon Hwawoo-ssi, what ability was that? Wasn’t your ability lightning?”

“You don’t really think I’ll tell you that, right?”

I responded to the female ranker’s question and gave her a wink. Then, I threw away the empty potion bottle. Although Elemental Tempest took 50% of my mana, if I prepared a potion beforehand and drank it in time, most of my mana would be restored by the time I was done! Since I could reduce the potion’s cooldown time, it was quite smart.

“What an enviable ability. Mm....!”

“Shockwaves are good too.”

“That’s enough chattering. Get ready.”

Hwaya shouted acutely. Since we would be going up against a S+ rank dungeon boss, it was understandable. Plus, she was likely preparing for the potential Event Raid as well.

[Shin, I’ll use Blessing again.]

[Yeah. Thanks, Ludia.]

“Plene, get ready to sing again.”

“Okay!”

Ludia stuck her staff into the ground and began to chant a holy scripture with a silvery voice. The fatigue that had unknowingly built up disappeared and my body brimmed with strength. It was truly mysterious. Even after her world fell and Ludia moved to Earth, she still maintained the power of the god she believed in. Although I didn’t think too deeply, I thought about the existences called gods once again.

“The boss is probably going to be a cyclops. After Lotte breathes

her black flame to decrease its resistance, we'll each use our strongest attack. The boss fight will start from there."

"Got it."

"Understood."

"The cyclopes' boss... I can't even imagine what it would be."

The party members began to prepare their attacks. Father's spear was vibrating since a while ago. I suspected that it was the new path of martial arts he created.

Then, it finally appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. It just suddenly appeared in front of our eyes.

[Guooooooooo!]

It was over 10 meters tall, and its red skin and ghastly eyes exuded an oppressive aura. As if just two arms weren't enough, it had an additional two for a total of four. It held a club in each hand. At the same time, Gluttony Spear began to vibrate. Eh? Wait, could it be...? As a thought crossed my mind, it opened its mouth. Since it probably wasn't going to breathe flames, it was probably going to shout.

[Black Curse Breath!]

What a cool name!

Before it attempted to fear the entire party, Lotte's poured black flames on it. The word 'pour' was extremely suitable for her attack. Like tar, her flames stuck to its body, unpleasantly squirming around and burning its body. If she wasn't on our side, I would have been frightened out of my wits.

[Guoooooooook!]

[It won't last long. It'll reduce its attack power, movement speed, and resistance to everything.]

[Why didn't you use that against the drake?]

[I couldn't back then. I acquired it after being with Hero... Mm.]

It seemed like Lotte was embarrassed, but I didn't have the time to think about that right now. Hwaya was the first one to attack. Her flames were so white that they could be mistaken as light.

“Die!”

Was that a universal shout!? Her flames struck the cyclops' chest, scorching it until its bones could be seen. Even more shocking was the fact that Lotte's tar was preventing it from regenerating. Father's spear attack then struck the same place. An explosion boomed and it trembled from the shock, coughing out a large amount of a blood. Father dodged its club swing and fell back, all

the while shooting a condensed shockwave aura.

“Die!”

“Really! It just sounds lame!”

We don’t need to all say the same thing!

“Eit, die!”

“Kuk!”

“Huu... Spear Charge!”

“I, I’m going too! Shield Rush!”

The other members exploded out with their attacks. The cyclops let out an enraged scream and tried to swing its clubs at them. Lotte’s tar was slowly losing its effectiveness.

“O power of the earth, stop the sword of the mobs!”

[Guook!]

Ludia’s silvery chant rang out, and the cyclops’ clubs halted in midair. Its wounded chest was wide open.

“Now!”

Ludia shouted. Her staff was radiating incandescence.

I aimed my spear at its chest. I had long since finished turning it into a white lightning bolt. The chest wound burned by Hwaya and dug by father! I could even see its beating heart.

“Dieeeee!”

“E-Embarrassing...”

Almost as if my spear was being sucked in, it pierced its chest with a huge explosion of aura. The whirlpool of aura devoured its regenerative power and successfully blew up its heart.

[You defeated the Event Dungeon boss monster, Cyclops Lord!]

[2,000,000 gold is distributed evenly amongst party members. You received 250,000 gold.]

[Kang Shin-nim's contribution is the highest. Choose your reward.]

1. Cyclops Lord's Broadsword
2. Cyclops Lord's Rags
3. Half Elixir
4. 1,000,000 Gold
5. Cyprus Dagger
6. Cyclops Lord's Golden Eye
7. Lump of Refined Blue Iron
8. Deathblood Ring

“Shin killed it, now's our chance, everyone atta... Eh!? It died!?”

Just like that, we perfectly cleared the Forest of Rage.

Author's note:

For the other 3 dungeons in Korea, they won't take so much of the chapter, and will mostly be skipped over. The important thing is the characters' accomplishments, not the process of conquering the dungeons... The dungeon will have to at least be SS rank to be exciting, right? ^^

Chapter 150. What We Can Do (8)

Although bonus stats were indeed something to look forward to, the rewards were undoubtedly more alluring. Other than a few that looked like traps, they all looked great.

After a bit of consideration, I chose the Deathblood Ring. It was a black metallic ring adorned by red gems. Just like its name suggested, it was quite chilling.

[Deathblood Ring (Unique)

Durability – 120/120

Equipment Requirement – Level 50+, Magic 100+

Option – All stats +5, Magic +10

Skill – Deathblood: 1. On attack, 2% chance to absorb 10% of enemy's mana to recover your mana. 2. On attack, 1% chance to inject your blood into the enemy. In exchange for 5% of your HP, the enemy falls under irresistible 'blood contamination' status effect.]

Well damn! I might have to kowtow to the dead Cyclops Lord for this!

I took off my gauntlet for a moment and equipped the Deathblood Ring. Although it looked a bit scary, it was also fashionable in a way. While I was looking at my hand satisfactorily, the female S ranker approached and asked with widened eyes.

“W-Where did that ring come from?”

“Curiosity will only bring your harm.”

Meanwhile, the others were also choosing their rewards. I was most curious about who would choose the Cyclops Lord’s Golden Eye and the Lump of Refined Blue Iron. In the end, it seemed they were taken by Hwaya and Shuna, respectively.

“Oh wow, this is an Orb!”

“... A what?”

When I turned around, a golden eye was shining on her palm.

“I thought it was a magic material, but look!”

On top of Hwaya’s palm, the golden eye ball that made me hesitant to touch it began to emit brilliant light and spin. It seemed Hwaya could move it as she pleased.

“There was something called sub-weapon. I didn’t know about it before. How lucky.”

“It’s good that you got what you needed.”

“D-Damn it... A freaking rag... Wait, this thing’s defense is amazing!”

It seemed Walker was satisfied with the reward he chose too.

“Sumire, you’re still waiting to choose your reward, right?”

“Yes. We have to recover our strengths before we get out in case an Event Raid breaks out.”

I didn’t know about ability users, but for dungeon explorers, they could not leave the Event Dungeon until they picked their rewards. The Event Raid would only break out after this phase. As they spent the past month clearing Event Dungeons, it seemed they were quite familiar with the process.

“W-Where did everyone just...”

“What is it? An extradimensional storage?”

“Yeah, extradimensional storage. It’s my ability.”

With a smile, Hwaya lied without blinking an eye. She was currently elated from receiving a sub-weapon, and the rankers also looked happy to see her smile, as they didn’t say much else about it. Seeing others starting to rest, I approached the Cyclops Lord’s corpse. Ludia tilted her head and asked through the guild message.

[Are you going to put that corpse into your inventory?]

[Ah, that's that, but more importantly, my weapon was responding to this guy.]

[Weapon?]

The four weapons the Cyclops Lord was holding. As Gluttony Spear didn't eat the same weapon it already ate, it only ate one of the cyclops' club and stopped responding. Although the Cyclops Lord's weapons looked the same, it was possible that they were slightly different. Since no one used clubs in our party, I obtained their consent and brought Gluttony Spear up to one of the Cyclops Lord's weapon. Gluttony Spear devoured the club instantly. I brought it up to the other club just in case, and it really did eat it!

“Ooooooh!”

“Kyaaak!”

Seeing my weapon eat another weapon, the female ranker, though it was annoying to keep referring to her this way, screamed. Of course, I didn't pay her any attention and let Gluttony Spear absorb the other two. Immediately afterward, the Gluttony Spear radiated a brilliant light. Finally, finally...!

[Gluttony Spear reached 99.9% growth. To reach 100% growth, you must imbue all of your mana into it.]

“I can’t do that now...! Why are you shining then!?”

As full of expectation as I was, I became angry enough to almost snap the spear in half. If I consumed all of my mana now, I would have to make everyone wait for over 20 minutes while I waited for two Mana Potions worth of cooldown time. It was probably better to wait until the fighting was over. With a bit of disappointment, I put the Cyclops Lord’s corpse in my inventory and turned around to face the others.

“Everyone’s done resting, right?”

“Yeah.”

“T-That! Was that also an extradimensional storage!?”

“Yeah.”

After Sumire chose the final item, a message appeared in front of us.

[You completely cleared a S+ rank Event Dungeon! All party members receive 3 bonus stats!]

[You will now return.]

The raid boss did not appear. Some clicked their tongues while some sighed in relief. Not long afterward, we were outside the gate.

The moment we came out, we found ourselves surrounded by countless Guardians. What was shocking was that most of them were at least S ranked Awakened. In other words, it wasn't just Korea's Guardians that were here. Behind them were soldiers armed with guns and tanks.

A man who seemed to be the representative of Korea's Guardian stood in the front. After meeting my eyes, he spoke.

“The Guardian and the government have decided that they cannot allow you to rampage any longer. We recommend that you surrender peacefully.”

Come one, if you were going to do this, you should have done it earlier! No, were they waiting for us to tire ourselves out from clearing a S+ rank dungeon? I first turned around. Woo Youngha and one other S ranker were collapsed on the ground. Seeing as how father was taking his hand back, it seemed they were trying to do something and got beaten up. That would mean... I looked at the female ranker, who was blinking her eyes in confusion.

“You didn't know?”

“What?”

“Yeah, Shin. That looks to be the case.”

“Haa, whatever then. Just stay put, got it?”

“Y-Yes!”

Good, she’s listening. I turned back around to the man. Then, I asked.

“Alright, first... Mmm, did you watch the video?”

“I did.”

“And you’re still using force.”

“Yes. You are bringing danger by being too confident in your strength. You entered a S+ rank dungeon without the country’s permission. As the citizens were not evacuated, if a large S+ rank monster appeared and you could not defeat it, countless civilians would have been exposed to danger.”

“Huh? You mean destroying low-rank gates won’t be a problem?”

“According to the New Moon Law, gates ranked A or below are under the jurisdiction of Guardian and Freedom Wing. What you are planning on doing is simply illegal.”

“And it can’t be helped if they let gates turn into dungeons because of their ‘lack of ability’?”

“ ... ”

I asked.

“You... Will you be okay with S or S+ ranked gates turning into dungeons? If the three remaining gates in Korea turned into dungeons, you should know well enough that Korea will be powerless against them.”

“Of course. We want to get rid of gates just as much as you do. We need to have a conversation. Not with such ill-planned and ill-considered method, but with a method that would secure the safety of Korea and the interest of—”

“So you want to negotiate.”

They wanted to destroy S or S+ ranked gates, but they wanted to keep the Event Dungeons A ranked or below for themselves. That was what that oldie was trying to say.

“You just have to promise that you will not enter foreign countries’ gates without their permission. If you do, we will spare no efforts to help you get rid of the gates. Of course, we will also take your words into consideration regarding the removal of gates.”

We realize that you're strong, so we'll put a collar on you and erase only the gates we want to erase. If you listen well, we'll even give you a couple low-ranked gates.

How surprising. His words were being translated automatically. Though, it's funny to think that Korean needed to be translated.

“There are already no gates left in Korea, so I don't understand why... No, nevermind, I understand. It's probably for shares, support from other countries' Awakened, or something along those lines. Fine, I'll keep this short.”

I raised my spear and slammed it down. Other than the female S ranker, Korea's other two S rankers had their legs broken.

“Come at me, you fuckers.”

[Prince is angry!]

[He says not to kill them.]

[What does killing mean?]

[Killing is... Elemental Blade!]

First, I shot an Elemental Tempest to the front. All ability users surrounding us were sent flying. Since they were all at least S

rankers, I believed that they wouldn't die.

“S-Shoot! Fire!”

The soldiers panicked and began to shoot, but unfortunately, none of us were weak enough to be hurt by guns or cannons. Weapons without mana could not penetrate our bodies, which were brimming with mana. In fact, most S rankers were immune to guns. Since they should have known this already, they probably expected us to give up after seeing their numbers...

“If you don't stop shooting those annoying things, I'll blow them up. When they do, we won't be the ones dying.”

At Hwaya's words, the firing immediately stopped. They had lowered their tail after being threatened with death. Modern weapons did not mix well with Hwaya. Just by snapping her fingers, they would become ineffective and might even blow.

While Hwaya neutralized the soldiers with all sorts of magic, I counted the number of ability users who withstood my initial attack. Although Walker and Ye-Eun were disarming the ability users taken out by Elemental Tempest, there were still over fifty ability users that were totally fine. To think they could gather so many rankers while we were clearing the Event Dungeon... It seemed Korea's Guardian wasn't so bad. Perhaps they considered us to be serious threats.

I fixed my grip on my spear.

“I counted heads, so don’t you think about running away. As long as you don’t die, our kind healer will heal you, so relax and come... Otherwise, I’ll make my move!”

Only after my shout did the rankers start moving. S rankers should be more than strong enough to fell a few buildings by themselves. Lightning, flame, arrows, restraining power, clumps of metal. All sorts of abilities were being used. Meanwhile, I extended my spear with Elemental Blade and swung it in an arc.

[I, I knew it! Ueeeeeeeeek!]

[I think that guy actually really enjoys Elemental Blade!]

[Wheeee!]

[Ah, wind! That’s mine!]

“You poor bastards, go to sleep!”

“O Earth!”

Father’s shockwave swept the area. A few ability users attempting to approach Ludia were struck by the wall of earth that suddenly popped up from the ground and were sent flying away. The area was becoming a total chaos. Only 10 minutes had passed since we came from the Event Dungeon, but the earth was fissuring, nearby buildings were falling, and trees were being rooted. At the same time, all rankers collapsed. The army already

fell back with tears.

“Satisfied now?”

I asked the man who made the offer. He had run away the moment I neutralized Korea’s two S rankers, but now that I looked, he was back.

“... I’m satisfied.”

He answered. On his face was a faint smile.

“Geez, you didn’t have to make it so difficult.”

“I apologize, but currently, no matter what you say, you cannot become justice. Even so... there are people who wish to be on your side. We just did what we could do.”

“... It seems Guardian isn’t completely rotten.”

“It is an organization formed to protect Earth. Please remember that.”

I smiled and spoke.

“If you want anything, tell me. I’ll sell it for a cheap price.”

“You know how to trade! In that case, we would like some materials you obtained inside the gate. I don’t know about other countries, but Korea’s ability users often cannot hunt properly from lack of equipment. It is so bad that even I was tempted by the idea of letting gates become dungeons.”

“I’ll contact you separately. Do you need help cleaning up?”

“We already have people ready, but thank you for the offer. Rather than that, you should go do what you want to do.”

“I’m liking you more and more. Good, that’s what we’ll do.”

I grinned and turned around. Ye-Eun tilted her head and asked.

“Shin, why are you being so friendly with that guy? What happened?”

“You see...”

I looked back at my companions. It seemed Walker really was tired, as he leaned on a wall and fell asleep, while father was looking at the collapsed S rankers like he had not gotten enough exercise. Hwaya forgot about the rankers and were playing with her golden Orb, while Ludia was treating the injured and Shuna was bringing the fainted people together. Sumire was assisting Ludia beside her with her own unique healing spell.

In other words, Ye-Eun was the only one who went wild without

fully understanding what was happening. Mm, how do I explain this...

“Basically, we got an unofficial approval to do whatever we want.”

“E-Eh!? What? When did we discuss that!?”

“Alright, if everyone’s done resting, let’s go! We have to finish Korea before the day breaks!”

“It’s already past midnight, Kang Shin!”

“That’s why we have to hurry!”

I snickered and retorted. Walker muttered, then grabbed his head in pain again. I couldn’t tell whether that guy was smart or dumb.

That day, before dawn, we took care of the three remaining gates in Korea. No one dared to bother us.

It was just that the word ‘Revival’ became the most trending word on the internet.

Now, it was time to leave Korea and party on the world stage.

Author's note:

If you noticed from the beginning, you're a genius! I would have noticed when I saw the army there. The only ones that aren't aware that the army is ineffective against high ranking ability users are ordinary citizens. In other words, the army was there to appeal to ordinary citizens, not the Guardian or the Freedom Wing. ^^

Chapter 151. Crimson Chaotic Spear (1)

When we finished cleaning up the remaining dungeons in Korea, it was 11 A.M. Event Raids did not occur once. According to Hwaya, the chance of an Event Raid happening wasn't that high. Although it was best for everyone's safety that they didn't occur, but I would have liked one so we could clearly show our skills to the masses.

We were currently in Hwaya's private plane. Although it would have been overwhelmingly faster to travel on Lotte, we all needed rest after clearing 4 S and S+ ranked Event Dungeons. Right when I was about to get some sleep, a thought crossed my mind.

“Let's go over the rewards.”

We promised to sell monster remains we got from A ranked or below dungeons to Korea for a cheap price. It was the same for monsters from S ranked or above dungeons, though we would selectively sell only a portion of them. I had no business with the corpses that were taking most of my inventory space. I did, however, have business with the rewards from the two S ranked dungeons and S+ ranked dungeons.

The first was the Deathblood Ring. Although the stats it gave wasn't bad, what was more important were its effects. A 2% chance to steal 10% of the enemy's mana, and a 1% chance to use 5% of my HP to put blood contamination status effect on the enemy. While I was clearing the other three dungeons, I felt elated every time the mana steal effect activated, but unfortunately, the blood contamination effect never activated. I was curious what it would do.

The second reward was a Half Elixir I got from an S rank dungeon. I considered choosing a weapon to feed to Gluttony Spear, but since its growth was at 99.9%, I decided to just go with the consumable. Even if I was on the brink of death, the Half Elixir would restore 50% of my HP and MP and cure me of all status effects. I already had a few emergency life ropes, but it wasn't bad to have another one.

The third reward was a battle sword I got from the second S rank dungeon. There was no need to describe it. It was Gluttony Spear's food.

Since none of us obtained much from this dungeon, we cleared the S+ rank dungeon with our cheeks puffed. This dungeon was amazing. Humanoid monsters appeared in this dungeon, and its boss was actually a group of 10 hunters. They each used different weapons as well. In other words, the rewards had variety to them! As it was an S+ rank dungeon, they were also extremely valuable.

The reward I got was...

[Perfect Hunter (Epic)

Durability – 360/360

Equipment Requirement – Strength +150, Dexterity +150, Magic +150, Mid-rank Crossbow Marksmanship

Options – Strength +15, Dexterity +15, Magic +15, Adds wind attribute to attacks using bolts, Attack Speed +20%, Automatic

Reloading, Can create Mana Bolts with 10 MP

Skill – Invisible Shooter: Your bolts become invisible, and their sound and presence disappear. Added 30% bonus to speed and attack power.]

It was a crossbow that drew the jealousy of all party members. It was the only Epic-grade item that dropped from this dungeon. Though it was an Epic item, it wasn't showy. It was made out of some black metal and looked rather coarse, but it still could not hide its luxurious aura.

I realized it with Hwaya equipping her Orb. It seemed this crossbow was being treated as a sub-weapon. Just by having it hanging by my waist, it raised my stats. The precious strength, dexterity, and magic stats had all gone up by 15. I really wanted to give this crossbow a kiss.

“I'm done with going over the items, so what should I do now...?”

‘I feel like I was forgetting something... What was it?’ I tilted my head and looked around. It was rather quiet, as everyone was resting in their own way. I then caught sight of Walker.

He had just woken up from sleep and was busy cutting and rearranging the rag he obtained from the Forest of Rage. I blinked and looked at Walker, trying to figure out why he had caught my attention. Then, I realized.

“Walker, what about Yua?”

“Today’s a school vacation.”

Walker looked somewhat happy.

“I got a phone call saying that I didn’t need to guard her today.”

“... Phone call?”

“From your mother! Don’t point your spear against someone’s neck!”

“Sorry. You made an easily misunderstood expression, so I overreacted, haha.”

“Just how much do you like your sister...!”

“What are you talking about, all oppas love their younger sisters.”

I puffed out my chest and declared proudly. Walker glared at me with the expression of a dead frog that was hit by BB gun pellets.

“I should show you an example. Go see how Brightman treats his younger sister...”

“He has a younger sister? I’d rather not meet her.”

“I know what you’re worried about, but she’s different than what you think.”

“No, I understand. Unlike her oppa, she’s extremely kind, right? That’s how it usually is in novels. Unfortunately...”

“Sorry, but you’re completely wrong. What I meant was, she isn’t as childish as Brightman.”

Walker snorted and said. His voice had become slightly higher.

“Sophie doesn’t try to act cool like Brightman. She understands her position extremely well and is quite reasonable for her age. Plus, her entrepreneurial talent is much higher than her older brothers. Most everyone in the Brightman conglomerate agrees that the one who should lead the group should be Sophie, not Joshua.”

“... Oh?”

Why was I so quick-witted about these things? I grinned and asked.

“You like her, right?”

“... Don’t joke. I already told you, I grew up with Brightman. She

naturally became a younger sister to me. Unlike Brightman, she didn't consider me a servant... No, maybe she knew but didn't treat me that way on purpose. After all, she hates the way Brightman orders people around."

Walker still had a serene expression. Was I wrong? I became uncertain, but it seemed Walker didn't want to tell me the answer, as he turned away and went back to working on his rag. I felt like there was something more, but since he wouldn't tell me, I reluctantly gave up.

After becoming bored again, I opened my inventory to put Gluttony Spear away... wait. What I was forgetting about was evolving Gluttony Spear!

My mana was completely full, and we would arrive at Japan in 20 minutes. Since it would take time to fly to the Event Dungeons, I should have enough time to restore my mana!

Good. I put Gluttony Spear down on the plane's aisle. Because of its length, people might get hurt if I didn't.

"Let's go."

I roused my mana and injected it into Gluttony Spear. Soon, it began to give off a crimson glow, which got more and more brighter as I injected more mana into it. Eventually, when most of my mana was injected, it gave off a similar brilliance as it did in the Forest of Rage!

“W-What’s happening!?”

“Wow...”

I closed my eyes, then opened them back up. My spear had changed its appearance. The shaft became... slightly thicker? The spear blade was longer and sharper. It was completely red from the tip of the spear blade to the edge of the spear shaft, while strange engravings were inscribed onto it.

[Crimson Gluttony Spear evolved to Crimson Chaotic Spear. A weapon that wasn’t completely absorbed has been accumulated as growth. Crimson Chaotic Spear’s growth: 47%]

[Crimson Chaotic Spear (Legend)]

Durability – 450/450

Attack – 7,000

Equipment Requirement – Strength +150, Dexterity +150, High-rank Spear Technique

Options – All stats + 10, Strength +25%. Adds ‘Chaos Flame’ attribute to basic attacks. Evolves by absorbing weapons. By injecting mana and chanting ‘Transform,’ it can be changed to its choker form. To transform it back into a spear, you can inject mana and pull it back.]

Legendary. I see, so that's the grade that came after Epic. Plus, its growth was already at 47% since it was unable to completely absorb a weapon before. It seemed like the Holysword was more amazing than I thought. Not to mention, even with these crazy stats, it could still evolve.

I tensed and grabbed the spear. Instantly, my body was overflowing with strength. All stats increased, and my strength increased by 25%. It felt like the first time I obtained Zeus' true name. I murmured, trying to quell the sense of omnipotence.

“Do people on the higher floors all have weapons like this?”

No, probably not all of them. I could tell instinctively that this wasn't a weapon people can get just by climbing the dungeon for a long time. Even so, explorers on the highest floors should have Legendary weapons and maybe even Legendary equipment.

Without a weapon like this, it must be impossible to break through the levels of the dungeon they were in.

All in order to beat their world's enemy, which might not be possible, even with such weapons.

“Good. I'm calm now...”

I planned on picking up my spear, but I changed my mind. It would be more convenient if I put it back in my inventory, but I would lose the strength I temporarily gained. Although there

wouldn't be a huge problem since it wasn't too different from when it was Gluttony Spear, I couldn't handle a weapon that would change my physical ability in such a way.

I had to carry it around as much as possible to get used to it. I looked at Chaotic Spear's option again. Transform... I already had a choker (translator). I hoped people didn't think I had a strange hobby...

I was quick to take action. I injected mana into the spear and quietly murmured, "transform." The spear immediately transformed to a reddish-black choker, which I promptly equipped. As it was still treated as being equipped, my strength was the same. Looking at the mirror, I found that the two chokers didn't look so bad together.

At that time, Hwaya peeked her head out into the aisle. After seeing me, she asked.

"Shin, what's that choker?"

"Something more important than my entire fortune."

"... What?"

Hwaya's face was full of question marks. However, she didn't ask anything else. An in-flight announcement had flown out.

[We will soon arrive at Japan's Kansai Airport. Please make sure

your seat belts are fastened.]

Once we landed, I would be able to show Hwaya what it does. With a grin, I sat back down on my seat. After being emptied, my mana was slowly filling back up. I could feel that my body was itching for a fight.

What kind of dungeons would Japan have? While drinking a Mana Potion, I thought of the dungeons that were waiting for us.

Chapter 152. Crimson Chaotic Spear (2)

Japan didn't have any S+ ranked gates, but it did have three S ranked gates. In addition, it had eleven dungeons ranked A or below. Although it was less than Korea, considering there were only about 200 Event Dungeons left scattered through Earth, Japan strangely had a lot of Event Dungeons. Right, similar to Korea, Japan had unnaturally many Event Dungeons.

Because of what happened in Korea, the media portrayed us as a lawless group. What was interesting was the reaction of the civilians when we neared an Event Dungeon.

“Whoa! Holy shit, it's Dragon Knight!”

“He came to Japan first!”

“Take good care of us!”

Most of the people that saw us were cheering us on. I was rather bewildered by their unexpected reaction, but I soon realized why.

“To them, this place is their home.”

“Imagine that a dungeon appeared in your backyard, and the only weapon and defensive equipment you had was a kitchen knife and a chopping board.”

“Doesn’t that happen often? It’s like that whenever you’re cooking and suddenly forced into battle. Ah, for the record, you’re better off bare-handed.”

“The one holding the knife and the chopping board isn’t a monster like you, but an ordinary civilian! Of course, you’d be better off with a knife than just your fists!”

To ordinary people, monsters were only targets of terror. Plus, Event Dungeons appeared wherever they wanted. They could be in the middle of deserts or heavily populated areas.

When dungeons became Field Dungeons, the government would aid the original residents, but it didn’t change the fact that they would have to move away or live with monsters right in front of them. Both options were extremely stressful. Since someone volunteered to get rid of the dungeons, it made sense that they were so happy.

Just like that, we cleared our first dungeon with an unexpected welcome. After eating a late breakfast in a nearby restaurant, I went to get Lotte back, as she had gone back to the dungeon during our flight here. When I came back, Hwaya approached me with a piece of paper.

“Shin, I planned out our route. If we’re lucky, we should be able to take care of all of the dungeons other than the S ranked dungeons. But, we have to ride your wyvern instead of my plane.”

[I refuse!]

“Please, Lotte?”

[Mmmm...!]

When I scratched Lotte’s neck and pleaded, she elongated her neck and began to contemplate. Hwaya made a dumbfounded expression, but I silenced her by giving her a thumbs up. Then, I scratched Lotte’s neck more. It was a special technique of mine. If ordinary people tried, they would only have their fingers broken.

“You’ll do it, right? Hwaya only says that because she knows you’re much faster than a plane.”

[Mmm...]

“Lotte, you’re the only one I can rely on. You’ll let us ride you, right?”

[F-Fine... Since it’s Hero’s request, I’ll allow the inept humans to ride me.]

“Thanks, Lotte!”

[Mm, scratch me more, Hero.]

[Shin, you’ve gotten pretty used to handling women, haven’t you...?]

[I didn't think you'd call Lotte a woman, Hwaya.]

Since we were in the middle of a city, we naturally caught the attentions of countless people. After they recognized Hwaya and me, it became even worse. In any case, I took the paper from Hwaya to memorize the route, when someone called me from behind.

“Oppa, here!”

A cute little girl handed a box of chocolate to me. It was similar to the [chocolate mushroom snack from Korea](#). When I took it, the girl smiled and shouted.

Note, it's not actually mushroom flavored or anything. It's just shaped like one, with the mushroom cap being the chocolate and the root being the cracker.

“Eat this and defeat those monsters!”

“Ah, thanks.”

To be honest, I was surprised. Not even a day passed since we caused a ruckus in Korea, but even a little girl knew us! As I thought, mass media is scary!

That aside, I patted her head to thank her for cheering us on.

“Thanks. It means a lot. I like this snack too.”

“Ehehe, I like it too!”

“But I don’t have anything to give you... Ah, do you like meat?”

“Hey! You’re not going to dismantle a monster here, right!?”

“What are you talking about, Hwaya. Meat is a universally loved food!”

Because Hwaya jumped in and stopped me, I had to give up on giving the little girl meat. I ended up giving her the cup ramen from my inventory instead, which she happily received.

After the girl left, the others came out of the restaurant as well. It seemed they were watching the little girl from just now, as Ludia’s expression was... shaking.

“Shin, you like... little girls...?”

“I knew you’d say that, but no. She must have seen me somewhere. She just gave me a snack.”

Ludia still looked like she didn’t believe me, but Hwaya grinned and supported me.

“It’s been awhile since the world began to revolve around monsters and ability users. High-ranking ability users are global superstars. Not to mention, we displayed the flashiest performance. Since Japan’s time isn’t that different from Korea’s, they already had morning and night time news to hear about us. It’s understandable that a little girl like her recognizes Shin.”

“You’ve gotten famous, Kang Shin. How about writing ‘Ally of Justice’ on a cape? You’ll be able to appeal to the masses better.”

“You shut up, Walker. We’re just doing what we can. What justice?”

I replied to Walker’s teasing bluntly. I opened the box of Japanese chocolate mushroom, grabbing a handful and throwing it in my mouth. It was delicious.

In Korea, we’d already clashed with Guardian once. It served as a show of force, not only to Guardian but also to Freedom Wing and various governments. Although it was a secret plan by the pro-gate destruction faction within Guardian, we’d still sent all of the rankers to the hospital. It was clear that we were unstoppable.

As for what happened, I presumed it went like this. Within Guardian there were those that agreed with dungeonifying gates, while there were those that disagreed. The former seemed to have the upper hand in the conflict, but when we made a commotion, the gate destruction faction took the chance to crush the other faction. Then, they showed the result to the whole world.

A conflict between a small number of people, who wanted to destroy the gates, and the Guardian, who wanted to create dungeons to reap benefits. If they could overwhelm us, they could have used us as the sacrificial lamb to calm the voices of dissent. Guardian was the world's protector. They would push the narrative that we were terrorists, and they would relate our cause to the act of terror as well.

Although it was absurd, the victors always had the stronger voice, while the losers could not say anything even if they were blamed for crimes they didn't commit.

However, Guardian lost thoroughly. It was exactly what the gate destruction faction wanted. The pro-dungeonification faction lost in physical strength and they also lost their cause through my interview. Could they stop us again in such a situation?

The reason Guardian was bigger than Freedom Wing was that it was an organization created to protect ordinary civilians from the monsters. Now that their claim that dungeonifying gates would protect humanity crumbled, they had no means to stop us.

Even so, they wouldn't be able to do a complete 180 and start destroying dungeons ranked A or below. If they did, it would be the same as bowing down to Revival, which only consisted of 8 members. In the end, the only thing they could do was to leave us alone. They would pretend not to care no matter what we did and would focus on clearing S ranked gates to show their good side. It was the best way to recover their image.

What I didn't expect was how glorified we were. I clearly told the

representative from Korea's Guardian that I would cheaply sell the monster corpses ranked A or below. However, he had announced this grandly. In other words, we became Santa Claus, who got rid of various countries' gates and gave them monster remains. In a way, it wasn't wrong.

At first, I was unhappy that he made such a big deal out of it, but we didn't have much use for low-ranked monster remains anyway. Since his announcement increased our reputation, we also decided to cheaply sell monster corpses to Japan. In truth, it was possible since no one in our group was lacking money.

Perhaps for that reason, our popularity in Japan reached the heavens. Up until now, the only Asian SS ranker was China's Xin Shaomei, but Revival had 4 Asians. They especially seemed to like the fact that its leader was Asian. Of course, there were the Korean-hating Japanese who went out of their way to leave hateful comments on every news about us. However, they were only an extreme minority.

Plus, even though Sumire was hiding half of her face with a mask, people suspected that she was Japanese from her frame and facial structure. Revival's popularity in Japan was only natural. That said, Sumire was a half, and her frame and facial structure were both different from a traditional Japanese girl's... Well, since she was still Japanese, I couldn't say anything about it.

After Japan, our [dungeon breaking](#) continued to Britain (Brightman was nowhere to be seen), France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and other Western Europeans nations, all in just two days. That said, there were only 18 gates in Western

Europe. Korea and Japan really did have an unnaturally large number of gates. With how big Russia and China were, they had 23 and 28 gates respectively. Even so, they were relatively few compared to Korea and Japan.

Like dojo breaking

“Are we mostly done with Western Europe?”

“Other than Italy, yeah. Though, that could be considered Southern Europe.”

“Italy...”

When I was young, I had visited there with father for training. Of course, back then, surviving and getting stronger were my only goals, so I didn't visit any tourist attractions. While I was reminiscing about Italy, Hwaya whispered in my ear.

“You know that there's an SS ranker in Italy, right? I heard that person is quite sexy.”

“I'm not interested...? Besides, France also has an SS ranker, but we didn't see him. There's no guarantee that we'll meet all the SS rankers.”

“For the record, the SS ranker is a man.”

“Oh.”

I became irritated. I don't know what kind of a crazy person used the word 'sexy' to compliment men, but I didn't like it! It wasn't because I was expecting a sexy female ranker! Ludia began glaring at me too!

"I wonder how handsome he is. I'm looking forward to it."

"Go ahead."

When I grumbled, Hwaya laughed.

"I'm kidding, so don't worry about it too much. I'm only focused on a single man right now. I don't have the leisure to look at other men."

"... That's a funny joke."

"Haha, sorry."

My face reddened and I turned away. Because Hwaya's hit and run came at the most unexpected timing, I couldn't get out of it well. Thankfully, if I just sat in this awkward atmosphere, someone came to take care of it. Who?

"You're too close to Shin!"

"O Earth...!"

The other girls, of course. With a sigh, Hwaya got off.

“Yeah, yeah. Don’t worry, kids. I won’t do any foul play. Anyways, start getting ready.”

Italian ranker... I wonder what kind of a person he is. No, I’d rather prefer that I didn’t meet him. Murmuring to myself, I got up. Italy had a S+ ranked Event Dungeon. To be honest, I couldn’t wait to get the S+ ranked dungeon’s rewards. I transformed the choker into a spear and pointed it at the direction of Italy.

“Let’s go! To Italy!”

“I want to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa!”

“I want to see Rome and Firenze!”

“Venice’s gondola rides! And Undines!

“We aren’t going there as tourists! And no matter how hard you look, you won’t find any Undines!”

“T-There aren’t Undines?”

No! If you want to see them, look in Neo-Venezia!

Author's note:

Japan and Western Europe were taken care of in just one chapter. The chapter title is Crimson Chaotic Spear, but somehow it was only mentioned once towards the end. Oops.

When I was planning, I created the SS rankers based on countries' images. There are 4 SS rankers in Western Europe alone... (2 in Britain, 1 France, 1 Italy). Mmm... it's not because I like Western Europe! Definitely!

PS

1. The Japanese chocolate mushroom snack is called Kinoko no Yama. It's from Meiji Dairies Corporation. There's a high chance it copied Korea's chocolate mushrooms... T.T For the record, there's a similar snack called Take no Ko no Sato by the same company. I heard there is a war between the two snacks to determine who takes the throne (kidding)

2. Undine, Neo-Venezia: It's a reference to the famous healing anime, ARIA. More specially, it refers to the city and the boatmen.

Chapter 153. Crimson Chaotic Spear (3)

We safely took care of most of the dungeons in Italy. Although Sumire was a bit sad that there wasn't a dungeon in Rome, after I told her that we could all come back to visit after we were done clearing Event Dungeons, she seemed happy.

The only remaining dungeon was the S+ ranked dungeon.

“Why did it appear in Venice's waterway of all places?”

“Eh... Really?”

Didn't this happen before? Right, wasn't Windermere like that too? Hwaya seemed to have thought the same thing as she shrugged and nodded her head.

“Yeah. If it turns into a Field Dungeon, Venice would be done for.”

“In various ways...”

I finally understood why Italy's media was especially supportive of us compared to other countries. It would be more detrimental to have Venice's Event Dungeon turn into a Field Dungeons than to lose a few low-ranked Event Dungeons. I grinned and urged Lotte on.

“Alright, let’s go lessen their worry, Lotte.”

[Graaaaaaaaaa!]

Lotte answered with a spirited shout and flew faster. With her astounding speed, it only took 20 minutes for us to reach Venice.

There, I met with someone I didn’t think I’d meet.

“I’m Luca Bruno. You all really are extremely beautiful ladies.”

On top of the bridge near Venice’s Event Dungeon, Italy’s SS ranker was waiting for us. Like Hwaya said, he was very handsome. His slightly messy hair and shirt looked showy, and he seemed to be in his mid-20’s. In any case, the powerful mana I could feel from his body certainly told me that he was an SS ranker.

“Oh, how beautiful. I’ve seen many women across the world, but I’ve never seen such dazzling beauties.”

“Hiik.”

When Luca Bruno extended his hand, Ye-Eun and Ludia, who were bad with strangers, made frightened noises and hid behind my back. Sumire, who didn’t like flattery, frowned, while Shuna looked a bit happy and Hwaya was laughing. For the record, Plene got tired from clearing the A ranked or below dungeons, so she wasn’t currently here.

“Beautiful? I haven’t heard such compliments recently.”

“Of course. I’ve heard a lot about you, Miss Mastiford, but you’re even more beautiful than I imagined. Your eyes are like rubies, only prettier.”

Hwaya smiled at Luca Bruno’s compliment and said to me.

“Did you hear that, Shin? He said they’re prettier than rubies.”

“Well... I don’t think he’s wrong.”

“Oh, then shouldn’t you tell me that? No matter how beautiful I am, I won’t know if you don’t tell me.”

“Sorry, but I’m not the type to say something like that. Imagine if I said those words to you.”

“... Pft! Puhahaha!”

“If you’re going to laugh, don’t ask!”

Hwaya burst into laughter. Since an SS ranker praised her on their first meeting, it was no wonder she was feeling good. I looked at Luca Bruno, who looked confused at Hwaya’s laughter and sighed.

“I’m Revival’s leader, Yeon Hwawoo. Nice to meet you.”

“Oh, I apologize for my rudeness. I’ve been distracted by the beauties. My bad, Dragon Knight. I’m Luca Bruno from Italy’s Guardian. As you probably know, I am an SS ranker.”

Luca Bruno explained why he was here. It seemed he wanted to help us clear the S+ ranked dungeon. Although I was confident we would have no problem without him, it wouldn’t hurt us for him to help. Just when I was about to nod...

“Sorry, but we’ll have to decline.”

Hwaya answered with a smile. Then, she did what I couldn’t understand. She approached me and linked her arms with mine. I was dumbfounded by her sudden approach, while Ludia jumped and Sumire made a cute shriek.

“If someone joins in, it’ll be hard to do this. You understand, right? Ah, we can still provide the monster corpses from the dungeon. Not for free, of course.”

“Oh, sorry, I almost made a mistake.”

“No problem. You already did, but you should know with this, right?”

Hwaya gave him a wink and turned away.

“Let’s go in, guys.”

“Yeah.”

Her voice was light but resolute. We followed her as if we had all been enchanted. The moment we entered the dungeon, however, she gritted her teeth and growled.

“Shin, next time you see him, kick his balls.”

“What, why?”

“That bastard tried to make a move on me. His ability has to be hypnosis or charming. I’m sure of it. I felt his mana moving stealthily. Not just to me, but to all the other girls. You didn’t feel it?”

“What!? Damn, I didn’t notice it at all!”

It was completely out of my expectation. To think Luca Bruno would scheme on all the girls in my party! I finally understood what Hwaya meant when she said he already made a mistake!

However, it was hard to believe he used his mana without me noticing. How could I not notice? Considering Hwaya noticed but I didn’t, his ability was surely a mental type ability. Ye-Eun, who

remained silent the entire time, nodded her head at Hwaya's words and added.

“Yeah, it was scary. For a second, he looked like Shin and was attractive. I thought about calling Master, but the feeling disappeared instantly when I used ‘Bleeding Heart.’”

“To confuse a man like him with Shin...”

Ludia berated Ye-Eun with a cold voice. I didn't even know why Ye-Eun was being scolded. After all, she canceled his ability immediately with the special breathing method she learned from Duca!

Hearing Ludia, Hwaya asked her.

“How was it for you, Ludia?”

“Don't call me Ludia! ... I felt something, but I shook it off with my holy power. Mitarus is the Goddess of Justice and Love, so an ability that brings false love is useless against me. I didn't think you guys were so weak that you would fall for such an attack. If you asked me beforehand, I would have helped you shake it off.”

“Uuu, I think he had me, Ludia. When Hwaya unni refused and exerted her mana, I snapped out of it. I protected myself with guardian power afterward, but I was afraid to say something. That man is scary.”

Listening to the others, Sumire was gritting her teeth. It seemed she didn't feel anything. Was it the power of Athena's true name? Regardless, I was certain she was extremely angry. Unlike her usual calm self, she was shouting curses.

“He's the worst! The worst, worst kind of men!”

“Right. People who try to control other people's feelings are the worst. Smiling on the outside like nothing, while trying to... That bastard, I want to kill him.”

Hwaya gritted her teeth and joined hands with Sumire. Several white fireballs were floating around her. Bewildered, I shouted.

“Why didn't you tell me? I would have immediately cut off his lineage!”

“Huhu, my son's all grown up.”

“He probably turned out like that because of you, Kang Yungoong. After being with you, I finally began to understand Kang Shin. You're the real enemy... Kuk.”

Looking at how angry I was, Hwaya surprisingly made a small smile.

“I knew you'd react this way, so I came into the dungeon first. We're finally in a good position with everyone supporting us. Imagine what would happen if you harmed an SS ranker.

Everything would have gone back to square one.”

“It doesn’t matter. It’s not like I started it to get everyone’s support. It’s more important to pay back the indignation everyone suffered.”

“Yeah, but I’m happy with just your words. Though, I’m a bit unsatisfied that you didn’t refer to me specifically.”

“Everyone is my precious friend and comrade!”

When I emphasized that point, Hwaya made a dumbfounded expression, but soon smiled again. My grip on my spear became loose because of her lovely smile.

“Yeah, let’s see how long you’ll run away with those words.”

Because I couldn’t get myself to face her smile, I turned away. I knew what she wanted from me... but I couldn’t answer her at the moment.

So instead of answering her, I urged everyone on.

“Let... Let’s go hunt monsters! We need to clear this dungeon fast, so I can go kill the bastard!”

“Like I said, you can’t kill him. Did you hear what I said? Plus, he probably ran away already.”

Regardless, Luca Bruno's scheme enraged us all, and motivated us to clear the S+ ranked dungeon faster.

The dungeon itself was quite peculiar. Was it because it appeared in the waterway? The dungeon was half-submerged in water, while salamanders and fish type monsters stood erect inside the water. They took turns jumping out and shooting high-pressure water that seemed to be powerful enough to cut diamonds. Without Hwaya, it would have been difficult. In other words, with Hwaya, they were of no threat to us. Her powerful flames easily evaporated the water they shot out, and we took the opportunity to kill them.

“Please forgive us, we don't want to die!”

“We learned the human language just to apologize!”

“Screw off back into the water!”

Hwaya's flames raged, sweeping through the fish spouting nonsense. Because she focused all the bonus stats she gained through clearing Event Dungeons in magic, her flames had gotten incredibly powerful. They could even instantly turn S+ rank dungeon's monsters to ashes. We were busy trying to catch up to her performance. Although she laughed it off in front of me, it seemed she was extremely angry about what Luca Bruno did.

In the end, we managed to clear the dungeon in just two hours. After we defeated the two boss monsters, a large salamander and a

large fishman called Sahuagin, we chose our rewards. For the first time in a while, my contribution was 2nd. In any case, I chose an item called ‘Crystal Lair,’ as it had a fancy name...

“An underwater tent? A high-class household tent that makes underwater as cozy as the surface...?”

I picked an item that looked good, but a strange item popped out. As its option, it provided an unlimited supply of purified water and bread. With this, I would be able to live underwater forever! Though I didn’t need to at all!

I stored the puzzling item in the inventory and waited for the others to finish.

“If a large monster appeared, Venice would be done for.”

“Don’t jinx us.”

Although people nearby should have already been evacuated, Venice’s beautiful waterways, bridges, and buildings would all be destroyed. Shivering at what Ye-Eun said, I waited for the message.

[You completely cleared the S+ rank Event Dungeon! All party members gain 3 bonus stats!]

[You will now return.]

“Tsk.”

“Someone just clicked her tongue! Who was it!?”

With a new mystery, our dungeon breaking in Italy ended. As Hwaya expected, Luca Bruno was nowhere to be seen. I wanted to go find him and break his legs, but there were still Event Dungeons we had to destroy. For now, I had no choice but to let him go.

Brightman and now Bruno. The number of people I had to beat up was increasing. That was good.

“Why are all male rankers like this? Why do all of them care so much about women?”

While leaving Italy, I asked. Ludia then retorted bluntly.

“Shin, you need to be more like them.”

“Ludia’s right. You need to care more.”

“Sorry, my bad.”

No, now that I thought about it, there was a normal ranker. The American man in the place we were currently flying to.

“Pepper, how about Leon Pepper!?”

“He’s... gay, I think?”

“Are you saying people who don’t act like Brightman and Bruno are all gays!? Isn’t that too much!?”

While Hwaya’s controversial claims continued, our plane firmly headed to America.

One of the two SS dungeons on Earth was waiting for us.

Author’s note:

A new SS ranker! And almost like it was promised, he was a bad guy. He has to die!

Luca Bruno will appear again later. This Italy chapter was mainly to introduce him. I hope he’ll get beaten up the next time Shin sees him!

Chapter 154. Crimson Chaotic Spear (4)

For a month, Hwaya led the other guild members to clear Event Dungeons, and 20 days passed since I joined in. There were now only 48 Event Dungeons left in the world.

“Just my bonus stats are over 150. I have a lot of skill points saved up, too.”

Sitting in a New York hotel, I looked at my status.

[Name: Kang Shin Race: Human Sex: Male

Class: Elementalist (Sub – Skill Collector, Tamer) Title: Zeus
Rank: Gold 9

Level: 54

HP – 43,820/43,820 MP – 35,460/35,460

Strength – 215(+111) Dexterity – 205(+79) Constitution – 194(+66)

Intelligence – 32(+59) Magic – 200(+109) Charm – 87(+99) Luck – 39(+49)

Normal Skills – High-rank Martial Arts (Lv 6), Peruta – Mad Typhoon (Lv 1), Mid-rank Crossbow Marksmanship (Lv 9), Mid-rank Gale Track (Lv 2), Mid-rank White Lightning Consecutive Strike (Lv 4), High-rank Heroic Strike (Lv 2), High-rank

Provoke (Lv 5), Divine Speed (Master), Return (Lv 4), Heavy Armor Mastery (Lv 5), Mid-rank Dash (Lv 7), Peruta Circuit (Lv 8), Soul Guard (Lv 8), Dimensional Travel (Lv 1), Overwhelm (Lv 2), Deific Manifestation, Death Counter, Riding

Class Skills – High-rank Spirit Mastery (Lv 2), High-rank Spirit Aura (Lv 9), Mid-rank Elemental Control (Lv 9), Mid-rank Elemental Contract (Lv 9), Mid-rank Thunder Tempest (Lv 2), Mid-rank Elemental Blade (Lv 8), Mid-rank Elemental Tempest (Lv 8), Thunder Beast (Lv 3).

Subclass Skill – Endow Skill, Taming (Lv 3), Spirit of the Collector, Spirit of the Tamer (Lv 3)]

[Speed +45%, Strength +40%, Charm +15%]

[148 Event Dungeon clears, 9 Event Raid clear. Accumulated bonus stats: 195]

[Current skill points: 21]

No matter how generous I was, these were not the stats a level 54 explorer should have. Walker, who had cleared Event Dungeons with me for the past 3 weeks, only had half of my total stats. In addition, I currently could not bring out the full potential of my stats. After all, my stats had gone up by over 150 in the past few weeks. I could constantly feel my body getting stronger and adjusting itself, but I did not know when it would end.

“Did you sleep well, T.K.?”

“Hey, Pepper.”

I put my mask on just in time and replied to Pepper with a sigh. Then, I got up from my bed. Pepper was standing in front of the opened hotel room door.

“Don’t be so bland! It’s our reunion! Then again, it’s been too soon.”

“I didn’t think I’d see you again so soon either.”

I retorted unenthusiastically and drank some water. Pepper looked around the door and blurted out in surprise.

“What, the blonde miss isn’t here?”

“Don’t think Ludia is always sleeping with me. She’s calmed down a lot. Plus... Wouldn’t it be more of a problem if she was here? You would have just walked into the two of us.”

“You’re right! I was just too excited for today! It’s today, right?”

“Yeah, it’s today. I don’t know who, but you sure have a good informant.”

After finishing my water, I slammed down the cup on the table and twisted the corner of my mouth up.

Right, today was the day we entered the SS ranked dungeon in Lower Eastern Manhattan.

“T.K., as you already know, America suffered a lot from Antelope Canyon’s dungeonification. Because of it, they’ve thought a lot more about gates than other countries. This time, when the gates appeared in mass, they already decided to destroy all gates, even the lower-ranked ones.”

Pepper explained as the two of us went on the hotel’s elevator.

“The fact that Team Revival was working to destroy gates also influenced them. You know about it, right? That day... we owed a huge debt to all of you.”

“Debt, you say...”

I naturally thought about Ciara, but that wasn’t what was currently important. I let Pepper continue.

“You see, America actually has this amazing ability user. She’s a daughter of an esteemed family, and she can tell if a large monster will appear when a gate disappears.”

He began to talk about her.

“With her help, we began destroying the gates where giant monsters wouldn’t appear. Guardian, Freedom Wing, and rogues all worked with the same goal in mind. Of course, we didn’t have the time to destroy all of them. We really have to thank you for helping us destroy them.”

“For such a large country, America didn’t have that many gates. Plus, monsters appeared from two of them.”

Thankfully, America’s Guardian had already told us about it. As thanks, we sold them monster corpses for a cheap price. This way, it would be a fair give and take.

When they told us that they knew where boss monsters appear, I already suspected Ciara had a hand in it, but I didn’t think she was so deeply involved. It seemed she was doing her best for her country as well.

... If only she would continue to do so.

“Good morning. Eh, Pepper’s here too? Don’t tell me, he really is...”

“I was surprised seeing his face so early in the morning too.”

“Glad to see you’re healthy, Flame Witch! Anyways, T.K., to cut to the chase, America is very supportive of you guys. We empathize with your cause and we want to help you! Many Americans are

touched by your bravery to go into an SS ranked dungeon, too! So, as an SS ranker, I can't miss out, can I? If I did, I would be losing my honor as a Guardian! That's why I'm here!"

"We're just doing what we can."

"Ku, how cool, T.K.!"

Listening to Pepper's somewhat sarcastic praise, I joined the others. As we didn't want to go into an SS ranked dungeon when we were tired, we each took some time to rest and check over our equipment and potions. We also cleanly used up the bonus stats we got. After a day, we were in our peak condition.

Even Shuna, who was the weakest among us, could just barely be considered an SS ranker in terms of physical ability. On the other hand, Hwaya and I, who were the strongest, could... probably only be described as SSS rank.

"Is everyone ready?"

"Yes!"

"I got changed and I'm all ready to go!"

"Well, I feel like I won't die anytime soon."

"I'm looking forward to it."

Everyone seemed to have done maintenance on their equipment, as they were shining. As for me, I looked incredibly suspicious with Otus' Secret, ordinary shorts, and a t-shirt. However, I had several rings on my fingers and a bracelet that changed into a sturdy set of armor whenever I injected mana into it. On my ears were fancy earrings, and two chokers on my neck. It was then that I realized something...

“... Don't I look like a delinquent?”

“No, thanks to your mask, you only look like a weirdo.”

“Damn it!”

“But with your handsome face and good body, you look okay.”

“That's not a compliment!”

The SS ranked dungeon was located in a park in Lower Eastern Manhattan. Because the gate appeared right at the entrance of the park, the entire area became off limits and the most elite Guardians were protecting it. Although Guardian and Freedom Wing rankers planned to enter it initially, they gave up after we stepped in.

To be honest, even if we didn't come, it was uncertain whether they would actually get organized enough to go in. After all, they were still having trouble clearing S ranked dungeons. Only two S+

ranked dungeons had been cleared by groups other than Revival. It went without saying that the other SS ranked dungeon in Russia was also left alone.

“The dungeons’ difficulty is growing faster than ability users.”

Hwaya said bluntly.

“I don’t know when another wave of Event Dungeons will come, but at that time, an SS+ ranked dungeon might appear. One day, even an SSS ranked dungeon might appear.”

To prevent that from happening, we had to let ability users grow. The easiest way to do that was... I glanced at Pepper. If it was him, I felt like I could trust him.

I asked Hwaya for her opinion through eye contact, and she shrugged in response. It meant it wouldn’t hurt to try. I immediately asked Pepper.

“Hey, Pepper. Do you want to join our team?”

“Oh? You guys are recruiting? Sorry, T.K. America would be in danger without me, hahaha! But I like you and your friends, so we can talk about it again when another SS ranker appears in America!”

“Yeah, take your time.”

As I expected, Pepper refused my offer. I didn't blame him. He should prioritize his country. However, if he didn't become our ally completely, we couldn't appoint him as a dungeon explorer... Mmm, how troublesome. At that moment, Sumire stepped up.

[If you're hesitant to appoint him to the First Dungeon, how about the Second, Shin-nim?]

[No, Sumire, that's...]

[I feel like he's trustworthy. Shin-nim thinks so too, right?]

[I do... but...]

There weren't many ability users like Pepper, who was pure and strong. He had a good personality. Even so, we didn't watch over him for a long time, and if he decides to say anything about it...

Hwaya then spoke.

[Soul Contract.]

[Ah!]

[Uuuk... You cruel bastards, kuk! I remembered it again, kuuk!]

Soul Contract cost 500,000 gold. Although it originally cost 1,000,000 gold, neither were prices I couldn't afford. I couldn't say it was a small amount, but with the First Dungeon and Beyond, it would be easy to make that much.

“Pepper, I want to make an offer.”

“Man, thank you for thinking so highly of me, but persistent men are hated!”

“I want to give you something as a temporary member.”

“... Temporary member?”

“Yeah, we can talk again after the dungeon. How about it?”

Pepper looked to be in thought. Soon, he nodded.

“Alright, since my friend is thinking about me so much, I can do that much.”

“Good. Then let's focus on the dungeon from now.”

I smiled and led the crew to the dungeon. However, my mood soon plummeted. I met the one person I didn't want to meet.

[Hero-nim, I wanted to see you!]

This person that called me Hero. Plus, she was the only one on Earth who could randomly contact people with telepathy. Ciara Kenex. Wearing a see-through dress and surrounded by countless guards, she was waiting for us near the SS rank gate. I wanted to go back home immediately, but I held myself back.

“I didn’t really want to see you.”

[Can you make some time for me? We can talk over a cup of tea.]

“No.”

[Then I’ll be rude and steal a bit of Hero-nim’s time here. Please forgive me.]

“I won’t.”

Even at my blunt rejection, Ciara didn’t even blink. No, she had her eyes closed anyway. Her voice didn’t shake at all. No, it was telepathy. Mm. She used telepathy as if she wasn’t fazed at all.

[You became more reliable and imposing since the last time I saw you. You also became extremely strong. In such a short time... Although I can’t see with my eyes, I can tell.]

“How sad.”

[I heard about Hero-nim's accomplishments. They were truly hero-like. My eyes weren't wrong. You really are perfect!]

“Knowing that what I did is to your liking makes my stomach churn.”

It was hard to refute what she was saying. I had to use the influence my name had in America. Even though I told Ciara I wouldn't do as she wanted, I ended up using the fame she helped create.

However, I also couldn't deny that it was the best choice. At the very least, I was confident that the method I chose produced the least amount of sacrifice.

[Hero-nim created conflict within Guardian and is becoming renowned throughout the whole world. Even without my help, Hero-nim could create a worldwide organization of ability users!]

“Their conflict has nothing to do with me. In addition, I'll refuse anyone who asks to work for me.”

[I was too insolent. I acted as if Hero-nim needed my help when Hero-nim is already outstanding... I finally understand. I just want to do what I can by Hero-nim's side. I only want to protect Earth against the danger it faces, and unite ability users to a single organization. That is all I want. Though, if Hero-nim would let me give birth to a child, I would be extremely happy...]

This girl was insane. Completely insane. She wasn't even listening to me.

"I'm going to say it again. I have no plans to accept such heavy responsibilities. I'm going to continue doing what I can, protecting myself, my family, and friends. I can't confidently say I've been doing that, but at least from now, that's what I'll do."

'Though, the number of friends I have to protect have been increasing recently...'

When I was done talking, it seemed Ciara had paid attention to me this time, as she smiled. Even though she couldn't see, she looked at me accurately. It was kind of frightening.

[Huhu, I can't wait. The world will be saved by Hero-nim, and dirty humans' conflicts will disappear under Hero-nim's rule. And I... Yes, I would like to think of our child's name beforehand!]

It seemed world domination was the goal she had in mind for me. I was sincerely disgusted by Ciara's ecstatic expression and shouted.

"I will never, ever, never, ever, never get in a relationship with you, not even if the world ends and we're the only two people left in the world. If you want me to be more straightforward, I will. Nothing will happen between us even if I have to die!"

At my shout, people began to clap. Other than Pepper, all of the

members of Revival were clapping.

“Yep, I recorded it. I’ll make Ludia listen to it while she’s sleeping.”

“Don’t even think about it!”

I took the recorder from Hwaya and also shouted at Ciara.

“If you’re done, screw off!”

[C-Can I have your contact information?]

“Never.”

[But sometimes, I want to hear Hero-nim’s voice...]

“Don’t talk like a kidnapper and screw off!”

[T-Then, can I call you next time? Thank you! You really are kind!]

Now that I thought about it, she already knew my address! This girl only asked me to get my permission, and she was pretending that I did when I didn’t! For a moment, I got curious as to how she’d call me since she wouldn’t be able to use her telepathy over the phone, but I felt like asking her would only make the situation

worse. As such, I chased her and her guards out with a little show of force.

[Ah, if you destroy this gate, a giant monster will appear! Be careful, Hero-nim!]

“I’m not thankful at all!”

Just like that, the nine of us (with the addition of Leon Pepper) came to challenge the SS ranked dungeon. Although my physical condition was best, my mental condition was... This was all Ciara’s fault!

Chapter 155. Crimson Chaotic Spear (5)

[You entered the Event Dungeon, 'Insect World.']

“Hiiiiiiik!”

The moment the message rang out, Hwaya screamed and jumped at me. Feeling the sudden warm touch and the sweet scent, I looked down at Hwaya blankly. At the same time, the others, who were also looking at me blankly, said with cheerful voices.

“We won’t be able to expect help from Hwaya, but let’s do our best!”

“Daughter, spiders aren’t insects. You won’t see them here, so don’t worry.”

“Ajusshi, I’m bad with both spiders and insects...”

Yep, I knew she’d say that... I couldn’t help but sigh.

“Hwaya, I understand how you’re feeling, but this is an SS ranked dungeon. Without you, we’ll be in danger.”

“Yeah, sorry... I’ll try my best.”

“We haven’t even run into any monsters yet.”

“How long are you guys going to stick together!”

Seeing Hwaya not getting off after saying she’d do her best, Ludia raised her eyebrows. With a bitter smile, I slowly separated from Hwaya and turned around.

“Then I’ll go survey the area on Lotte... Lotte?”

[This Event Dungeon prevents monsters with strong mana from entering. Tamed monster, ‘Lotte,’ could not enter the dungeon.]

“It’s just one thing after another.”

Since Plene wasn’t strong enough for an SS ranked dungeon, I sent her back. Lotte, on the other hand, could raise my strength by twofold just by being with me. Unfortunately, she couldn’t enter the dungeon. She probably won’t be in any danger outside, but without her, we might be in danger.

No, that was the old me. My stats were increasing by the day, and I had also learned Mad Typhoon. Even before that, my companions and I defeated the SS+ ranked Flame Drake. There was no reason we couldn’t clear this dungeon with our current strength. It wasn’t good to underestimate ourselves.

“T.K., what’s up with her? What is she scared of all of the sudden... Insect?”

“Ah, you’ll understand soon.”

The moment I answered Pepper, the ground fissured, almost as if a secret base was hidden underneath. Then, a black head emerged from it. It seemed like the head of an ant, only magnified thousands of times.

Hwaya then jumped on me again.

“I, I might not be able to do it. Can I just stay like this?”

“No!”

While I shouted at Hwaya, father charged forward with his spear. His spear vibrated strongly as shockwaves gathered around it. The ant discovered father and pointed its giant head, creepy eyes and annoying antennae at father. Then...

“[Men!](#)”

In Kendo, this is what you yell when you strike the helmet/head area

“I know how you’re feeling, but you’re a spearman, father!”

Father struck his spear down vertically at the ant's head. Surprisingly, the ant easily received father's spear with its hard carapace. Even as its head grinded against father's vibrating spear, not even a scratch appeared on it. It really had an incredibly powerful integument.

“Haa!”

However, father didn't back down and shot out even more powerful shockwaves. He was probably the best in the world in bypassing his enemy's powerful outer defense and attacking its internal system. The ant twitched for a moment before its head exploded and shot out its bodily fluid.

“Kyaaaaaak!”

Because the terrified Hwaya blocked the bodily fluid with her flames, it didn't splash on us. On the other hand, father looked like he had gone swimming in a pool of it. He didn't seem to mind at all, as he gave us a thumbs up.

“Did you see that, son!?”

“Yes, father. It was a perfect battle.”

I inattentively complimented father, when Ye-Eun suddenly hushed us by putting her index finger over her mouth.

“Something's coming here in large numbers, Shin.”

“In large numbers?”

I promptly focused on the tremor of the ground and the presence of mana. There really were enemies gathering here in large numbers. The problem was that they weren't just coming from land.

When I looked up, it was exactly as I expected. I could see a black cloud swarming toward us. That was...

“A swarm of locusts.”

“Huk... Kyaaaaaaa!”

In the end, Hwaya couldn't overcome her fear of insects and exploded. The scarlet flames she shot out pulsed like waves and swept over the swarm of locusts heading toward us.

“Don't come, don't come, don't comeeeee!”

“Girls who hate insects are scary...”

I inadvertently nodded my head at Walker's murmuring. An indescribably vast scale of flames –one that I had never seen before– began to burn the locusts that numbered close to a disaster. Each of the locusts that died crashed on the ground, ringing a large thud. At the same time, a spicy fragrance spread

out, and I had to stop my drooling father.

“There are others coming!”

Ye-Eun shouted hurriedly. Damn it, I had briefly forgotten about it because Hwaya’s attack was so overwhelming! I could feel countless presences from the ground as well. The moment I realized, I stuck my spear into the ground and shouted.

“Thunder Wave!”

[Kiaaaaa!]

[Kashakashakasha....]

The damned insects sang in response to my lightning attack. No, please stop... You’re giving me goosebumps!

Just like the ant we initially killed, they appeared from within the earth. Most of them were ants, but there were also beetles, worms, and larvae. I didn’t think insects were that creepy but seeing them magnified thousands of times, I could undoubtedly say they were one of the most frightening and creepy monsters I met.

After Hwaya saw them, she began to shake.

“I, I’m scared, Shin. I’m scared.”

“You’re doing great, Hwaya. Just focus on burning the locusts. I’ll take care of the rest.”

“Y-Yeah, g-got it.”

Hwaya tightly shut her eyes. Meanwhile, the others were killing the insects in their own ways.

“Haha! I didn’t think there were monsters who could survive a bullet from my Desert Eagle! How fun!”

“O Earth, punish the creatures who stole thy blessings and defied thy providence!”

“They’re tough! But they aren’t looking at me even when I hit them!”

At Ye-Eun’s words, I looked around. No matter how much my companions attacked them, the insects ignored them and were charging to a particular place. It seemed their target was... my father.

“Hahahaha, come at me! I, Kang Yungoong-nim, will take you on!”

Father shouted a line from a 90’s movie and faced the incoming insects. His shockwave ability was an extremely good match against the insects, as it destroyed the insects’ insides.

What was the difference between father and the other party members? It was obvious. Father was covered with the bodily fluid of the ant he killed. Plus, he was being updated in real-time with other insects' bodily fluids.

“Father, you need to wash yourself off! The ant's bodily fluid is attracting the insects!”

“Don't we have to kill them all anyways!? Why don't you get covered in it too?”

“Thanks, that's exactly what I thought you'd say!”

If father volunteered to take the aggro, it was the duty of a good son to make use of him.

“Father said he'll bait them on his own! Ludia and Pepper, reduce the number of insects coming from afar! All the close-ranged attackers, stay near father and attack the insects! Ah, Shuna, you stay and protect Hwaya, Ludia, and Pepper!”

“Got it!”

“Good idea!”

After explaining our strategy, I took Hwaya off of me and gave her to Shuna. Then, I shot forward with my spear. Peika was

already infused in my spear and flickering with lighting. As I surged up the power of Peruta Circuit, a whirlpool began to form. I shouted.

“Ruyue!”

[Yay, it’s been a while since I materialized.]

“I’m going to use a skill. Will you be able to run?”

[Yeah!]

I immediately jumped on Ruyue’s back. As Ruyue ran forward, I thought, ‘There were just too many of these insects. Not even mentioning the swarm of locusts covering the sky, there were hundreds of insects coming toward us.’

Hundreds of SS ranked monsters! What a... What an enjoyable battle!

I immediately activated Gale Track. With the increased speed, I instantly sent a beetle in front of me flying.

“Oraaaaaaaa!”

Every time I sent an insect flying, Ruyue accelerated and the charge became stronger. With the effect of the armor and tattoo, our charge was already amplified by 110%. Every time we sent an

insect flying, it was rising by an additional 7%. After the tenth insect, the insects' bodies began to explode just by making contact with my spear. I freely changed the trajectory of the charge and killed the insects. If you wanted to defeat Revival, defeat Kang Shin with just this much, you were gravely mistaken!

“Haaaaaaaap!”

I let out a spirited shout, realizing that Gale Track's power had reached its peak. In other words, we had already sent over 30 insects flying.

My original strength was amplified by Gale Track, which was then amplified by 110%, and was then amplified by another 200%. Although I would have been stronger if I was on Lotte, there was no reason to discuss what could have been. I was glad that Ruyue was here.

“What are you, a tank!?”

“Wow, he's so strong!”

“O Earth, protect him from injuries!”

How many insects did I kill? After running wild in the front line for a while, I suddenly felt the earth trembling. I could only imagine that the second wave of insects was coming.

I took care of the insects nearby and got ready for Gale Track's

final blow. Wind energy gathered and strengthened Mad Typhoon.

“Come, I’ll send the leading monster flying...!”

I held my spear tightly and adjusted my stance. I was prepared to kill any monster with one blow.

Then, it shot up from the ground. A head with a terrifying horn, a leg like a crimson thorn, a segment, a leg, a segment, a leg, a segment, a leg... I couldn’t help but shout.

“A centipede! Hey, you’re not an insect!”

Damn, if you’re going to do this, name yourself Bug World, not Insect World! Now that I thought about it, I felt like there were non-insects in the ones I already killed.

“Isn’t that guy getting caught up on the wrong things?”

“T-That’s what’s cute about him!”

“I got it, Flame Witch, but you open your eyes and say that?”

“Die, you stupid arthropods!”

I placed my rage in my spear and released its storm on the centipede. The centipede that had finally appeared was instantly

blown into pieces, dying without even completely pulling itself out of the earth. Just the part that was outside was well over 20 meters long. By the looks of it, not even half of it was out of the ground.

“Looks like it’s a semi-boss monster.”

I placed my hand on the centipede’s severed head and placed it in my inventory. Checking with Mana Detection, around the third segment, I noticed... a Mana Stone. Good, the Mana Stone of an SS ranked dungeon’s semi-boss! This is what makes dungeon runs exciting!

“Guys, there’s something other than locusts flying here!”

While I was drunk on the feeling of victory, Pepper’s rather tranquil voice rang out. Something other than locusts? I raised my head and looked at the sky Pepper was pointing toward. I could really see another swarm of insects that weren’t locusts. I inadvertently cursed out loud.

“God damn Asian giant hornets!”

It seemed the fight would only get worse from here. I heard Asian giant hornets could kill humans, but those guys were enlarged thousands of times. That’s... cheating! The biggest cheat was...

“You bastards don’t even live in America!”

Ignoring my shouts, the Asian Giant Hornets flew toward us like

arrows. It was the start of a second round.

Author's note:

Next chapter, we'll finish the dungeon boss and start the Event Raid! The chapter after that, we'll finish the Event Raid and head to Russia's SS rank dungeon... maybe...

PS – I plan on holding a character popularity contest soon. One contest for all the characters and one with just the heroines. Finally, a contest... for whether the ending should be harem or not! (This isn't a popularity contest per se but I'll do it anyway!) This contest can affect how the series will end (since I haven't decided on it yet, especially the third contest), so please join in! I'll do it around ch160 or 170!

Chapter 156. Crimson Chaotic Spear (6)

“Hwaya, take care of them!”

“B-Bees!? H-Hornets! ... Huuua.”

I heard something collapsing. Walker quickly reported.

“Oi... Mastiford stopped moving.”

“That’s not good!”

I wanted to make Hwaya snap out of it, but the Asian giant hornets were too quick for me to afford to look away. I had to block the hornets while Hwaya was recovering.

“Ruyue, please!”

[Un! Crystal Cloud!]

Ruyue’s elemental magic created countless crystals of ice in the air. Invisible particles formed a foggy cloud and continued to expand.

“T.K., is this your ability? How amazing!”

“It’s the ability of the wolf I’m riding. Her name is Ruyue. Keep

watching, it's only the beginning.”

The swarm of hornets flying toward us entered the cloud. Immediately, they slowed down. The ice crystals had stuck to their bodies and wings, slowing them greatly. But that was only the beginning!

“Peika, materialize!”

[I've been waiting!]

Spirit Aura was canceled, and a beauty wearing a black dress appeared in midair. She knew exactly what she had to do. With a smile on her face, she held a whip of lightning. I put a Mana Potion in my mouth and shouted.

“Cook them all!”

[Chain Lightning!]

The crystal cloud covering the hornets turned into a storm cloud in an instant. The wave of lightning raged in the vast sky and burned the hornets. However, there were still many hornets, and there were still insects crawling out of the hole the centipede created. Even though they were all SS ranked monsters, they really had no manners, popping out in groups instead of one by one.

Waiting for the Mana Potion's cooldown time to end, I swung my spear. Father, Walker, and Ye-Eun also decreased their numbers. I

was glad that I brought Pepper along. He had a handgun in each hand. Other than when he reloaded, he constantly shot out bullets. His attack was magnificently stopping the advance of the insects. It was then that Hwaya snapped out of it.

“Hwaya, help!”

“Sob, I hate this place so much...!”

It seemed she was feeling better now that she had woken up after fainting. Even as she sobbed, she held up her staff. Her staff became heated red, and her mana instantly surged up. The mana then traveled back into her body and flowed to her Orb. The golden eye constantly blinked and radiated light. Then, I felt that the insect army all turned their attention toward Hwaya.

“Everyone, get ready to attack!”

Hwaya shouted and threw the Orb up. I realized then that it wasn't Hwaya that drew their attention, but the Orb. The Orb repeatedly flickered with golden light before the light burst out into all directions.

[Kyaaaaaaaa!]

[Kigigigigi!]

Both the insects that crawled out of the ground and the insects that flew in the sky stopped in place. I thought it was some sort of

a restraint magic, but Hwaya then said something absurd.

“I tied them all together. The ones exposed to light will all take 10% shared damage for the next 10 seconds!”

“That’s a cheat skill!”

“It’s the Orb’s ability!”

“That’s a cheat item!”

In any case, I couldn’t waste the 10 seconds she gave us. I poured my aura into Chaotic Spear. A reddish black chaos flame began to burn above the spear. I gave the rest of my mana to Peika and shouted.

“Peika, attack just one of them with full strength!”

[Thunder Bolt!]

The lightning Peika shot out then burned a nearby beetle until not even its ashes remained. The bugs that were exposed to the orb’s light really screamed and began to burn. The other members also used this opportunity to each attack one target with full force.

[Kiaaaaaaaaaa!]

[Kaaaaaaa!]

The effect was astounding! They didn't just stop moving, they were dropping dead! Watching the Asian giant hornets die was especially enjoyable. I then focused my energy in my spear. Before the 10 second period passed...

“This is the final blow...!”

In front of me was an especially large ladybug. Because of Peika's powerful lightning, it still couldn't move properly. I aimed my spear, which was burning with a black flame, at it, and thrust it right on top of its carapace!

[Kiaaaaaaaaa!]

The strongest move I could do was Heroic Strike! With my entire strength concentrated on the Chaotic Spear, the spear easily pierced through the ladybug's carapace and completely burned its body. With this, my mana was completely empty. However, I could deal a powerful blow to it within the 10 second Hwaya gave us. Other bugs should have received heavy damage as well.

I would never have thought that the 'chaos flame' effect, which I only thought was an attribute, could turn into black flames when I put in my pure aura. I had only just noticed because I had always used Spirit Aura before. As I thought, it wasn't a Legendary grade weapon for nothing! Since the ladybug was burnt up in an instant, it was clearly extremely powerful.

“Whew, I’m exhausted.”

After taking my spear back, I immediately struck down on the ground and held myself up. The Mana Potion was still on cooldown, but the Health Potion had a different cooldown. However, before I could take it out and drink it, I felt myself feeling invigorated. Ludia had healed me. I raised my head to thank Ludia.

And I froze.

“My god...”

“Shin, what did you do?”

“What is this, son?”

“... T.K., you’re amazing!”

Everyone looked dumbfounded as they added their remarks. Since I was just as dumbfounded, I couldn’t really say anything. It was only now that I realized... the effect of chaos flame when used without Spirit Aura and with pure aura!

[Kiaaaaaaaaa...!]

[Kigigigigigi!]

[Kugagagagaga!]

All the bugs that had been exposed to the Orb's light were burning with black flames. No matter how much they screamed or hit their bodies against the ground, the flames weren't extinguished.

They screamed endlessly and struggled against the flames, but with the damage they took from the other party members, they didn't last long and collapsed. The countless army of insects had all died.

Only then did the black flames recede and disappear.

Hwaya shouted.

“That's a cheat skill!”

“N-No! It's Chaotic Spear's ability!”

“That's a cheat item!”

Damn, she returned the words right to me...! It wasn't that I didn't know Chaotic Spear added chaos flame attribute to my basic attacks. I just thought it was an ordinary attribute bonus. I never even imagined that it would be stronger than Peika's Spirit Aura. I had only just realized this attribute's strength.

A flame that couldn't be extinguished until the targets' death. Wasn't that Amate... No, any more was dangerous!

“Kyak!”

“Damn!”

Suddenly, the ground began to shake and fissure. The SS ranked monsters corpses were falling into the crevices. Although these precious items were falling into nothingness, we couldn't grab them. The ground under us was fissuring too!

“Kuk, O Earth!”

Ludia's staff let out a radiant light. The splitting earth subsided and the crumbling earth rose back up and supported us. It seemed it was not an easy feat even for Ludia who could control the earth, as she was sweating profusely. Ludia bit her lips and shouted as she struck her staff on the ground.

“T-There's something underneath...!”

“Since all the bugs are dead, it's probably the boss.”

“Please don't be a spider, please, please, please don't be a spider...!”

At Ludia's words, Hwaya also began to sweat and murmur. Her

prayer seemed to have worked as a long and giant horn popped up. Then, a second horn popped up.

Its imposing head appeared, covered by a helm, and it stood tall with its armored body that was dozens of meters tall. Almost like a god of death from hell, ominous black flames were covering its body, making it look all the more horrifying.

He let out a low and long roar.

[Uooooooooong...!]

Its voice was full of dignity and instilled terror in its listeners. Although I wasn't affected thanks to my Overwhelm skill effect, I shook and shouted.

“Hercules Rhinoceros Beetle...!”

“I-Is that something to be so surprised about?”

Leaving behind the somewhat serious Ye-Eun, I tightened my grip on my spear and swallowed a mouthful of saliva. It didn't look simple at all. Not only was it ginormous, but the black flames burning around it added additional pressure. Could it be that it's... No, how could that be!?

Because of its size, it took a while for it to completely leave the ground. However, we stood around in a daze, waiting for it to make its appearance. No one thought to attack it. We experienced

facing an overwhelming enemy during our fight against the Flame Drake. The reason we were staying still wasn't because of that. We... We...

Then, it finally finished coming out of the ground. It felt like the ground had heated up. It raised its head and observed us. Almost like an emperor of the sky, it looked down at the ground. The black flames covering its body raged as if to burn us for just looking at it. Because of the flames' increasing pressure, we had to fall back a bit. Thinking that we were afraid, it let out a satisfied roar.

[Uooooooooong...]

Then, it collapsed.

[You defeated the Event Dungeon's boss monster, 'Evil Rhinoceros Beetle Lord!']

[4,000,000 gold is distributed evenly amongst party members. You received 500,000 gold.]

[Kang Shin-nim's contribution is the highest. Choose your reward.]

Just like that, we cleared America's SS ranked dungeon. Cyclops Lord's Golden Eye really was amazing!

Chapter 157. Crimson Chaotic Spear (7)

If I didn't kill the ladybug with chaos flame, defeating the boss might have been more difficult. However, I burned the ladybug thoroughly, and the boss also appeared with flames on it. I had only found out with this incident, but it seemed chaos flame could deal continuous damage to its enemy in addition to being inextinguishable. With how big the Hercules Rhinoceros Beetle was, the flames were dealing fatal damage to it.

If I tried to set it on fire without all that, it would have been impossible with my mana. The party members' stamina and willpower would have been worn down as well. We couldn't tell because it was already dead, but we might have had even more trouble depending on how it fought. We could easily see that its horn would deal fatal damage to anyone hit by it. He must have also had other means of attack. Of course, everything was impossible to know now that it was dead.

We could say we had gotten lucky. I believed it was thanks to the good karma I gained throughout my life. Then, I put the boss' corpse into my inventory. Everyone was focused on me.

“Son, hurry up and choose your reward. Don't make your father die while waiting.”

“What a fun father, T.K... But a reward? Choosing it? What are you talking about? And what did you do to that beetle?”

“There must be other things you find strange. I'll tell you all

about it when the raid ends. Of course, you won't be able to run away after hearing everything, kukuku."

"Don't threaten someone while you laugh maniacally! Also, choose your reward!"

Since everyone was getting impatient, I turned my attention to the reward list.

[1. Golden Scarab's Tattoo.]

After seeing the first item on the list, I chose it immediately. I didn't even check the other rewards. A tattoo! I had to have it! It wasn't like an equipment, which I would replace eventually. Tattoos raised my stats permanently. I wouldn't be losing out by choosing it. Immediately afterward, the back of my left hand became hot. I took off my gauntlet and looked, where I saw the tattoo of a golden scarab.

[You obtained Golden Scarab's Tattoo. Your luck and defense increase by 20%. All defense type skill effects increase by 50%. Positive effects will be added to all reproductive activity.]

Just as I expected, the effect was amazing. Since the luck stat could not be increased with bonus stat points, the only way to increase it was through items or titles that raised all stats. The

Golden Scarab's Tattoo raised my luck stat by 20% on top of raising defense by 20%. It even amplified defense type skill effects! I could only imagine how powerful Dragon Skin would be now. Plus, this positive effect to all reproductive activity... I wasn't doing any reproductive activity, but I was sure having it wouldn't hurt me!

One thing I was curious about was that this Golden Scarab's Tattoo was shaped differently than the Evil Rhinoceros Beetle Lord. Of course, it wasn't too important of a matter. When I was stroking my completed scarab tattoo in satisfaction, Hwaya screamed.

“There's nothing but insects!”

“Hwaya, you remember what this dungeon was called, right? Don't forget there's an Event Raid afterwards.”

“I hate it, I hate everything...”

In the end, everyone other than the last person finished choosing their rewards. A helmet for father, a ring for Hwaya, and even though no spiders appeared at all, there was a dress made out of spider silk, which Ye-Eun chose. It seemed it wasn't what she was expecting, as she screamed when she received it. She didn't even show me what it looked like.

As for Ludia, even though she could choose a better item, she chose the Elixir. If I remember correctly, she would always choose Elixirs, Half Elixirs, Mana Elixirs, or the like whenever they

appeared as Event Dungeon and Event Raid rewards. Although full recovery items like Elixirs were rare and she wasn't lacking in equipment... I couldn't help but ask out of curiosity.

“Ludia, why do you always choose Elixirs?”

“Unlike the consumables from Floor Shops, they can be used on other people... I'll use them when Shin's in trouble.”

“... Y-Yeah, thanks. But you have to use them when you're in danger too, okay?”

“Un.”

Damn, I was the idiot for being unable to guess the reason. Because I wasn't expecting that to be her reasoning, I became flustered and fell back. I thought no one had heard it, but Walker was already making fun of me.

“Love is always sacrificing oneself for one's partner. You two share a beautiful love.”

“Don't push your twisted ideas on love onto me.”

What should I do? If things continued, I felt like I really would end up as Ludia's husband. Feeling a chill run down my spine, I turned around toward Ludia. As she was looking at me with clear eyes, I turned away quickly.

“How’s everyone’s condition?”

“Perfect.”

“Same!”

“T.K., you can even manipulate when monsters will appear?”

“Yeah, I’ll tell you about that soon, too.”

“Really, if I didn’t fight with you in Antelope Canyon, I would be extremely suspicious of you right now! But since you said you’ll explain it to me properly, I’ll wait! I’m also in a perfect condition, so let’s go!”

Walker took out a potion and put it in his mouth. Then, he chose his reward. The world immediately began to crumble. At the same time, a huge energy gathered in mid-air, forming the appearance of a monster.

[An Event Raid has broken out! SS rank 50-man Raid, ‘Evil Mantis Queen.’ As your party cleared the Event Dungeon, you have the priority!]

The park outside the dungeon appeared along with the struggling

remains of the Insect World. In the midst of their boundary, a large mantis began to raise its body. Hwaya made another manhwa-like scream. Immediately afterwards, her scream was buried by an ear-splitting high-pitched voice.

[Humans, you dare chase me out! Send me back! Send me back now!]

We trembled at the chilling voice. SS ranked raid boss' power was added to the furious voice to the point that it almost could directly affect our mind.

[Do not involve me and my children in your battle! Send me back!]

My head rang. As for father and Walker, whose mental defense was much weaker than mine, they staggered without being able to carry themselves properly. This guy, or rather, gal... For a 50-man raid boss, she was too full of spirit! However, something she said caught my attention.

Right, she had just said the word 'children.'

The Event Dungeon completely disappeared, and we looked at the giant mantis who destroyed the entire park. Looking at its lower body... we could tell that it was unnaturally bloated. My god, she... she...!

“She’s pregnant! She’s bearing eggs!”

[Hero, Hero, Hero! You dog with a collar on your neck, it's you! You brought me here!]

“Cut the bullshit, Mantis! You were already here the moment the Event Dungeon appeared!”

[Aaa, Aaaaah! I curse you! I curse all of you! I curse him and this world! Since it's come to this, I will eat all of you! I will not let anyone who threatens my children live!]

Its front leg shined, and boundless mana began to gather in it. It was then...

[Hero!]

Lotte flew down toward me. She was waiting for me nearby! I jumped on her back and patted her. Lotte looked at the mantis and growled.

[That bitch prevented me from coming in! She was trying to hide from other monsters! That bitch is a deserter!]

“Sorry, I'm not sure what that means yet.”

[You cowardly bitch, you dare separate me from Hero...! Next time, I will not leave Hero alone!]

“Uh, mm... Yeah, thanks.”

It seemed she was furious that she couldn't enter the dungeon. I again patted Lotte, who was flapping her wings furiously. Could it be that not all monsters were on the same side? Was that a good news for humans? I could think about that later. I had to focus on something more important right now.

“If an SS ranked raid boss gives birth, the result will be catastrophic. We need to defeat her here no matter what.”

Even as Hwaya said that with a trembling voice, she held her staff and Orb and prepared herself for battle. Cyclops Lord's Golden Eye began to shine again. It seemed she was gritting her teeth and holding on at this unprecedented event. Walker also stopped joking and murmured.

“A mantis' egg sac will hatch hundreds of tiny mantises. It could be less since it belongs to a monster, but... it could also be more for the same reason.”

With how bloated her stomach was, she would give birth soon. If she escaped, hundreds of mantis monsters, ones that received the power of their SS ranked raid boss mother, would be born. Just thinking about it was chilling.

“We'll stop her.”

Father said. His spear was vibrating from accumulated

shockwaves.

“We’ll stop her here and now.”

“Yeah, she’s undoubtedly weaker than the Flame Drake. There’s no reason we shouldn’t be able to defeat her.”

I also added to father’s encouragement. Although it had a stronger spirit than the Flame Drake, it could be understood as she was a child-bearing mother.

In truth, we couldn’t leisurely look at her. Mantises had wings. Although it was only my speculation, she probably could fly with them. That’s how monsters were. There were wingless monsters that could fly, so how could winged monsters not fly?

As such, we had to end it as soon as possible.

“I’ll go on ahead! Lotte!”

[Wings of light formed from black flames!]

Lotte spread her wings out and soared into the sky. She was already extremely fast, but she had gotten even faster. When I looked back out of curiosity, black flames were burning on her black wings. It was a skill she had never shown before. She... was furious.

“Son, stop her front leg! I’ll attack her legs!”

“I’ll join in, Second Master!”

“I, I’ll protect you two!”

“I’ll go behind her to attack.”

“I’ll attack on my own too!”

The close-ranged attackers charged toward the mantis. It seemed like she was far away because of her towering height, but in truth, she was quite close. That was just how Event Raids worked. In only a moment, everyone had reached her.

Surprisingly, the one who sent the signal for attack was Hwaya.

“Eat this!”

When the Golden Eye flashed, a ray of light shot out toward it. When it hit the mantis’ left front leg, it exploded.

[Kiaaaaaa!]

“A beam! How many skills does that thing have!?”

“That’s it! Hurry up and go!”

I imbued my spear with aura and let chaos flame burn up. Looking at its enormous size, I felt like I was Gulliver who had come to a kingdom of giants.

“Ruyue, Peika. Block its front leg.”

[Okay!]

[Got it.]

My dematerialized elementals replied reliably. Feeling them drawing out their elemental power, I smiled and shouted at Lotte.

“Charge at full speed!”

[I’ve been waiting!]

Lotte really accelerated instantly and charged toward the mantis’ face. However, the mantis’ reaction speed was also great. Before I could stab my spear into its face, its front leg quickly flew toward me.

[I will harvest your power!]

[You dare!]

[Freeze!]

If I hesitated even for a moment, the charge effect would disappear! I believed in my elementals' powers and without even turning around, I stabbed my spear, burning with black flames, in its face. Its front leg was paralyzed by Peika's lighting and froze from Ruyue's ice. As a result, it only cut through the air.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kyaaaaaaak! Flames, flames won't extinguish!]

"I'm not done yet!"

Lotte quickly accelerated and flew behind the mantis, leaving a trail of flames behind. Because she was so fast, the wind was hurting my face.

[Hero, I'm turning!]

"If I'm late even just a little, the others will be in danger! Aim for her face and continue charging!"

I shouted bluntly and put aura into my spear again. When we were charging toward her again, her entire body shook.

[YOU... YOUUUUU!]

[It's dangerous! She's emitting a powerful aura!]

[It's going to explode!]

[Hero, dieeeeeeeee!]

It was undoubtedly the skill she was initially trying to use! I thought it was canceled, but it seemed she had finished gathering mana!

Her left front leg, which had half-blown up from Hwaya's laser, glowed with a red light and flew toward me. Because of Lotte was going too fast, I didn't think she could dodge it. Even my elementals could not do much against it!

I thought quickly and even more quickly acted on it. Clicking my tongue, I kicked Lotte's back. My strength was powerful enough to affect Lotte, who was flying at full speed, setting her off course and crashing into the ground.

[Hero!]

"I won't die, so come catch me! Dragon Skin!"

I used my defense skill and flew toward the mantis. Although my speed was halved when I used Dragon Skin, with Giant Wolf's

Tattoo and Hermes' true name, I was 45% faster. With my dexterity stat, I couldn't be said to be slow.

[You'll die!]

“Ha, why don't you try!?”

My spear, burning with black flames, and the mantis' front leg, glowing red, clashed. The front leg instantly exploded into pieces, then rained down on me as sharp thorns. There was nowhere to run.

[Kukuku, I will have your power, Hero! It is the punishment for ridiculing a mother!]

The mantis' voice rang out unpleasantly. I couldn't reply as I was too busy defending against the raining thorns. It was extremely painful.

“O Mitarus! Protect him!”

I heard Ludia's voice clearly amidst the sound of thorns endlessly striking my armor. I could feel my drained vitality rising in an instant. I opened my eyes and shouted.

“Lotte!”

[On my way!]

I safely fell on Lotte's back. Using my mana, I pushed out the thorns stuck in my armor and raised my spear. I then heard the mantis' shocked voice.

[H-How can you be alive after that... Kahak!]

Before I noticed, one of her legs was severed and she was leaning to one side. Of course, it wasn't my doing. Because her fury was entirely focused on me, my companions could easily attack her.

[Y-You... You dare!]

"It's your turn now, Mantis...!"

Black flames blazed around my spear. When I focused all my energy, a new layer of white flame appeared over the black flames. The black flames tried to dye the white flames black, while the white flames only protected its territory. After fighting for a bit, they became silent, almost as if they acknowledged each other's existence. The others' attacks died down momentarily. The Mantis Queen had started to shoot small thorns like it did before.

[Mere humans dare to humiliate this Mantis Queen! You shall not be forgiven! Next time you see me, I will be your god of death!]

No, it was a feint! She had opened her wings and were about to fly away. However, we would not let that happen.

“Burn!”

Hwaya’s great mana distorted the whole space. Then, crimson flames flared up from the Mantis Queen’s wings. My elementals also attacked her wings.

[Don’t you dare run away after hurting Shin!]

[I’ll make you incapable of hurting Master anymore!]

Ruyue and Peika burned and froze her wings with their elemental power. They had also grown strong enough to fatally wound an SS ranked raid boss! In only a moment, her wings were broken. Her attempt to escape failed. Now that she had lost her wings on top of one of her front legs and back legs, she let out a furious roar.

[Kyaaaaaaaaa! I curse you all! Why did I have to come here!? Why did I have to hurt so miserably by mere humans!? Hero, hand over your power! Since you brought us here, pay the price with your life!]

This time, her right front leg stormed toward me. I charged at it to stab my spear in it, but the front leg backed away while dancing crazily.

When I looked down, Pepper, who was armed with a minigun, were shooting at it while laughing.

“Madam Mantis, you’re a million years too early to challenge

humans! Huhahahaha!”

[Kyaaaaaak!]

I had things I wanted to say to Pepper’s remark, but now wasn’t the time! Because of an ability user’s natural physical strength, he was unaffected by the gun’s recoil and had perfect aim. After being struck by hundreds of bullets, the mantis’ front leg could not reach me anymore. Now was my chance. I had to make use of this opportunity Pepper created!

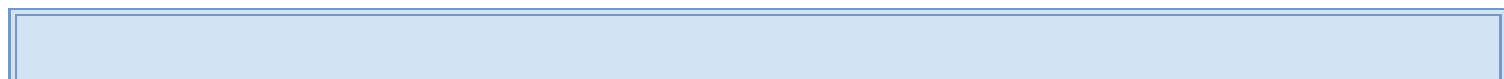
“Eat this! It’s an attack made out of 50% of your hated Hero substance and 50% of chaos!”

I aimed my spear toward its face, where the black flames I previously shot out was still gnawing on it. With this blow... I’ll end it!

[Aaaaah! Why must we disappear? Why must we lose our place!? Why must I die to the likes of you!? My children! What about my children!? Kyaaaaaaaak!]

“Sorry... But we’re busy looking for a way to survive!”

I gritted my teeth and shot my spear forward. Almost like they never fought, the white and black flames amicably pierced the mantis’ throat. Just like that, the mantis’ neck fell off.



[Event Raid success! Six of Earth's dungeon explorers and two independent dungeon explorers, a total of eight dungeon explorers has successfully completed an Event Raid! This great achievement increases the rewards greatly!]

[You obtained 3 stat points for completing the Event Raid.]

[Rewards will be distributed in order of contribution.]

[Kang Shin-nim's contribution is the highest. Choose your reward.]

- [1. Dimensional Travel Magic Book
2. Return Magic Book
3. Soul of Battle Blade
4. Elixir
5. Mantis Queen's Guardian Dagger
6. Mantis Queen's Battlescythe
7. 3,000,000 Gold
8. Wild Dance of Fresh Blood Technique Book]

After I saw the reward list, I fell from exhaustion. Similarly, Lotte flapped her wings slowly and landed. Now that I thought about it, Lotte did a lot today, even using a skill I had never seen before. Although it was to save her, I had even kicked her... I

stroked her head.

“Sorry, Lotte. Did my kick hurt?”

[It’s okay, Hero, as long as you stroke my head a bit more. The Hero is quite skilled at the head stroking technique. I can feel my fatigue disappearing.]

I smiled at Lotte’s words and stroked her head like she wanted. Perhaps because she was my pet, but I found it cute that she could not be honest with herself.

“Shin, are you okay!?”

“T.K.!”

“Hurry and pick your reward, I’m curi.... Kuk!”

“Son!”

“Shin!”

Since I took the Mantis Queen’s attack previously, it seemed everyone was worried about me. Ludia should know my condition the best since she healed me before, so I didn’t know why she was running at me with such teary eyes. Well, I guess it’s okay since it’s cute.

And you, I only just realized, but aren't you calling my name too freely in front of Pepper!? If he runs away, you better go catch him for me!

Author's note:

Ah... It went over... 10,000 characters... damn...

There just wasn't a good place to cut it in the middle. I didn't think it would drag out so long. Uaaaaaaah! It's double the normal chapter length!!

Chapter 158. The Rondo Of Scarlet Flame And Silver Ice (1)

After the raid ended, I honestly just wanted to sleep. Fatigue had built up from consecutively clearing an Event Dungeon and an Event Raid, and the Mantis Queen's words wouldn't leave my mind.

The world and the invaders. The relationship that I thought was simple did not seem to be so anymore. It seemed the monsters didn't come here on their own accord. There was an existence controlling them from the shadows and forcing them here. It was already confusing that monsters were hostile to each other, but there were more things to consider now.

“Hurry up and choose your reward.”

“Wait, let me take care of the risk factor first.”

I put my hand on the Mantis Queen's corpse and put it into my inventory. Pepper, who was watching, narrowed his eyes and muttered.

“T.K., the Flame Drake we fought before...”

“Alright, let's choose our rewards and go eat.”

I openly changed the subject and turned my attention to the

reward list. Then, I was surprised. To think Dimensional Travel and Return would appear like this! I already knew that there were few ways to obtain them. So Event Raid was one of them!

“It makes sense, I guess. SS ranked Event Raids are rare...”

Guild Revival’s members all knew about Dimensional Mercenaries from my explanation.

Since all Ye-Eun needed was more achievements and getting a title of an incarnation of a god, she probably wouldn’t be interested in these. The one who would be interested was probably...

First, I chose my reward. Although Wild Dance of Fresh Blood was tempting, Spirit of the Collector was shouting that the 3rd item, Soul of Battle Blade, was a better item. After a bit of hesitation, I chose the blade.

“Mm?”

Surprisingly, it was a small silver sphere. Not to mention, it looked rather familiar. Right, there was no doubt. It was the same shape as the elixirs I’ve gotten from 5th to 50th floors. I checked the item description just in case, and it was indeed a consumable item. Feeling a bit doubtful, I swallowed it.

[Your strength and dexterity increase by 10. You learned ‘low-

rank Blade Rush.’ Using the skill and charging forward will create sharp blades from your body using your mana. Upon reaching your target, all blades will be shot toward the target. As strength, dexterity, and skill level increase, the blades’ damage will increase.]

I was already surprised that it raised my strength and dexterity by 10, but it even gave me a skill! Not to mention, it was a charge type skill! If Gale Track was a multi-target charge skill, this skill was a single-target charge skill. I was always slightly apprehensive about Gale Track, as it took time (29 targets) to be fully-charged (200%). With this, I could focus on damaging one target, while still having the 110% amplification for charge type skills.

“Hm.... Okay, Return.”

While I was checking my item and its effects, it seemed the others finished picking their rewards. Dimensional Travel and Return went to father and Hwaya, respectively. Father said he chose Dimensional Travel because it seemed harder to obtain, while Hwaya planned to choose Return from the beginning. When I asked her why, she answered.

“I got a clearer information. When I solo clear the 80th floor, I can choose to go back to level 50 and start on the 50th floor of the First Dungeon. An administrative guild’s guild master told me, so I’m sure.”

“Level 50? If you’re falling by 30 levels, you’ll lose a lot of stats, HP, and MP.”

“I pretty much made up for it during all the Event Dungeon runs. More than I expected, in fact.”

“Ah.”

She was right. She started clearing Event Dungeons a month before me. She had gained about 250 bonus stat points. Excluding HP and MP, it was equal to about 50 levels' worth.

Although it should be higher, it seemed there was a limit to the bonus points Event Dungeons could provide us. After clearing 200 Event Dungeons under S rank, Hwaya couldn't get bonus stats from those dungeons. She could only earn bonus stats from dungeons that were at least S ranked. Furthermore, the amount of bonus stats she was getting from those had also decreased.

I was surprised she had cleared over 200 dungeons, but since I was nearing that number, I couldn't say anything.

Since we found out that the bonus stats obtainable from Event Dungeons were limited, being Dimensional Mercenaries was that much more attractive. Since Hwaya's desire to improve herself was as great as mine, she had wanted to become one the moment I told her about it. She couldn't give up on the First Dungeon either for the same reason. It would make her stronger.

Of course, it would still be true that she would get weaker, but Hwaya would be able to enter the First Dungeon with high stats, and she would be able to obtain the Dimensional Travel Magic

Book from solo clearing the 50th floor's Wendigo. Since her level would decrease by 30, she might be able to grind it as well.

Now that I thought about it, clearing 200 Event Dungeons and raking in stat points should be something only possible for early dungeon explorers like us. In other worlds, there were probably people like us, who raked in stats when monsters first began to appear. In other words, the moment that the world changed was the most dangerous time, but also the most opportunistic. Though different worlds must have been in different situations, it shouldn't have been too different.

"I don't know what's going on, but is everyone finished?"

"Oh, uh, yeah."

I remembered that there was someone here, whom we couldn't share the joy of getting rewards with. Since Pepper was looking at me with an extremely curious expression, I first decided to leave the area. Soon, the story that the SS ranked gate disappeared would spread, and things would only get more tiring if the media began to pester us.

A few hours later, Pepper became a Second Dungeon explorer under Sumire. Using Soul Contract, we made him promise to not tell anyone about dungeon explorers. Once another SS ranker appeared in America, he would have to join Revival and clear Event Dungeons or Event Raids when they happened.

Furthermore, when he leveled up and obtained the right to

appoint another explorer, he would have to get the majority of Revival's member's agreement before he could make someone an explorer. This did not apply to just Pepper, but to all of us.

Right. It seemed Hwaya was a bit dissatisfied that I made Ye-Eun into an explorer on my own. Hwaya and I were fairly closed back then, so she was unhappy that I didn't ask for her opinion on the matter. Since I felt a bit sorry, I agreed to this clause. Of course, we didn't make anyone else use a Soul Contract, but we knew that no one here would renege on a promise.

“So you've been hiding an immense secret like this, T.K.!? ”

Once Pepper entered the dungeon and came back, he couldn't hide his surprise. He checked his status window or opened his inventory as he continued to make exclamations of surprise. With a grin, I told him.

“With your ability, you should be able to climb to upper floors quickly. You'll get stronger as you level up, too.”

“My god, T.K...”

“You can call me Shin. My real name is Kang Shin.”

“Shin... Well then, friend, you can call me Leon! Since we're now friends that share the same fate!”

“Y-Yeah.”

Pepper... seemed to be overly excited. There was no music, but he was dancing to some beat.

“Hahahaha! Good, monsters hidden in some mysterious space! I can’t wait!”

Other than me, it seemed all the dungeon explorers had strange quirks... I made a bitter smile.

After making an ally in America, we left to clear the remaining Event Dungeons. Guardian and Freedom Wing weren’t just playing around either, as they cleared some dungeons ranked S or above. In the end, on the 58th day since the Event Dungeons appeared, there was only one Event Dungeon left on Earth. It was the SS ranked dungeon in Russia’s snowy mountains.

The reason that it was the only remaining dungeon was simple. It was because whoever the Guardian and Freedom Wing sent never returned.

When Revival began to tour around the world to clear Event Dungeons and received an unexpectedly positive response, Guardian must have felt impatient. They didn’t want to believe that a small group of fewer than 10 people could undermine their group.

There was only one way for them to recover their reputation. It was to conquer an SS ranked dungeon before us. As a result, Russia’s SS ranker, France’s SS ranker, and over 50 other S rankers

joined to attack Russia's SS ranked dungeon.

Of course, this all happened without public knowledge. The reason we couldn't see France's SS ranker when we visited was that France's ranker had already gone to Russia. We only found out about everything when we arrived in America.

As I said before, the result was catastrophic. After entering the gate, nothing was heard from them again. When the other countries' SS rankers heard that the rankers had gone missing for over 3 weeks, they refused to enter the gate. The reason was obvious. Even if they knew that a disaster would strike when an SS ranked gate turned into a dungeon, there was nothing they could do if entering the gate meant death. Not to mention, it was another country's gate. France's SS ranker became the idiot for volunteering.

It was then that we cleared America's SS ranked Event Dungeon and even perfectly subjugated the Event Raid monster. Although it wasn't Revival, Guardian, or Freedom Wing's intention, Revival's popularity had skyrocketed. Some even called us the last hope of humanity. It was exactly the type of thing I hated.

'You Guardian bastards, can't you do anything right!?' I shouted in Africa as I stepped on crocodile monsters.

[Our government officially requests Revival. Please save Russia from its impending disaster. We will agree to any demands you have.]

The situation only got worse by the day until Russia's Prime Minister finally made an official request to us. I imagined complicated talks were exchanged in the process, but what was important was that Russia's humiliating announcement was equivalent to Guardian's surrender. Ever since we clashed in Korea, Guardian had never even mentioned us, pretending that we didn't exist. But now, they had reached out to us on their own accord.

Although it wasn't our intention, we had planned to visit Russia last. However, they may have thought that we wouldn't subjugate Russia's SS ranked gate. I could only imagine the faces they would make if the truth was revealed.

In any case, Russia's promise was a promise we would gladly take. While thinking about what we could request from Russia, we flew toward Russia on Hwaya's plane.

"Russia and France's SS ranker... Do you think they're dead?"

"They're still SS rankers, so shouldn't they be alive? Though I've never met them, so I can't say for sure."

Hwaya answered uninterestedly, as she polished her nails. I was surprised since I didn't think she would be so aloof about the death of other countries' rankers. Almost as if she read my mind, Hwaya smiled at me.

"There's no use worrying about it now, Shin. Thinking negatively will have negative impacts on yourself, your friends,

and the world.”

“So you’re polishing your nails instead?”

“Of course, I have to always look perfect! Then, whoever looks at me will be happy. That’s a good reason, right?”

As Hwaya gave a flaunting smile, I ended up laughing as well. After polishing her nails, she started doing her eyelashes. I wondered if that was something she should do in front of others, but I had to admit that she looked beautiful. I retorted.

“You’re really full of confidence.”

“Why, did I say something wrong?”

“No. I’m also happy right now.”

“... If only you could always be that honest.”

Although that’s what Hwaya muttered, it seemed she didn’t plan on pursuing an answer, as she hummed and continued to do our eyelashes. It seemed she was in a better mood.

I took my eyes off of her and looked at Ludia, who was leaning on my arm and sleeping. She looked as beautiful as an angel. Looking at her, I felt deep affection rising up from my heart and weighing me down.

“.... Huu.”

“Shin, my mom says good fortune will run away when you sigh.”

“I can’t even sigh now!?”

But what a very Korean saying! I’d like to meet her!

After we entered Russia, everything was taken care of easily. The people we’d only seen on TV bowed and offered their handshakes. We stayed in the highest class luxury hotel and ate in the highest class luxury restaurant. In truth, it was quite meaningless to someone like me, who had no problem sleeping wherever or eating whatever.

Although we arrived in the middle of the night, a countless number of people greeted us. What was surprising was that they only showed their faces, then said that we should go eat and rest since we must be tired from traveling. I thought they would ask us to enter the gate immediately, but it seemed we had really gotten famous.

The next day, the prime minister asked to see me alone. I knew I had gotten famous from Revival, but I didn’t think the prime minister would ask to see me personally. I became slightly flustered and told the others about it before I got on the limousine with the prime minister’s secretary.

[Shin, careful!]

[It's fine. I can probably survive a nuclear bomb, too.]

I wasn't kidding. With my mana protecting me, neither the radiation nor the blast could damage me. I could hold my breath for 10 minutes if it came down to it, and if it was looking bad, I could always escape to the dungeon.

I had some idea about what the prime minister would say. It would probably be an explanation for Guardian's actions until now, an apology, and things regarding the future relationship between Russia and Revival. He might even ask Revival to join Russia. Other than that... he would probably ask if Russia could buy monster corpses we got from Event Dungeons or if we could rescue the rankers that went in previously.

But when I got to the small reception room, the prime minister laid out all sorts of overbearing flattery, like how thankful he was that I came or how good of a leader I was, then said this.

“If Russia's SS ranker is alive... please kill him.”

It was something completely unexpected.

Author's note:

After the next chapter, we'll go back to the dungeon! Shin will

challenge the dungeon's 54th floor and Beyond's 4th floor!

Chapter 159. The Rondo Of Scarlet Flame And Silver Ice (2)

[Our SS ranker was always mentally unstable. Before he entered the gate, he caused a huge incident. He murdered all key personnel of the government and top brass members of Guardian before he entered the gate.]

[He probably thought he could escape us forever by going inside the gate. It just shows how mentally unstable he is.]

[The team we created did not consist of 2 SS rankers and 50 S rankers as you may have heard, but France's 1 SS ranker and the 50 S rankers led by him. In other words, he was out of our control.]

[No matter how important SS rankers are, we can no longer tolerate his madness. He is a psychopath and a murderer. I beg you, please kill him. We will take care of the rest.]

I said that wasn't for me to do and refused. However, before I left the reception room, I told him that once I went inside the gate, I would act appropriately given the circumstances. When I came back to my companions, I told them what happened. Hearing that the government personally requested me to kill an ability user, they were extremely displeased.

“He killed all key personnel of the government, but the prime minister is alive?”

“Something stinks. Even if he’s telling the truth, it’s irritating. If he’s not, it’s more irritating.”

“Mentally unstable person... Why would someone like him have such a power...?”

If the prime minister was telling the truth and Russia’s SS ranker was alive, we may have to fight a human, not monsters, when we entered the dungeon. When I considered that the reason France’s SS ranker and other 50 S rankers couldn’t clear the dungeon was because of Russia’s SS ranker, a chill went down my back. However, Hwaya and father came to a rather simple conclusion.

“There’s no problem. We can just think of it as having one more SS ranked enemy.”

“She’s right, son. No matter who appears, can that person be stronger than me? Don’t worry too much.”

“No, father, what I’m worried about is... No, it’s fine.”

I couldn’t spoil the mood when everyone sounded so confident. Plus, I had already killed a human before. I couldn’t ask whether they could kill a human, even if he appeared as an enemy.

Before we entered the Event Dungeon, we inspected our equipment and condition. After seeing that everything was perfect, we headed to the snowy mountains where the Event Dungeon was located. The prime minister also came with us. This

person... didn't he have better things to do?

When we were about to enter the dungeon, Ludia tilted her head and asked.

“Shin, where's the wyvern?”

“Oh, Lotte? She left for training.”

“... You're kidding, right?”

“Do I look like I'm kidding?”

Lotte seemed to be extremely vexed that she couldn't enter America's SS ranked Event Dungeon with me, as she asked for my permission and left for training. I wanted to ask what training she was doing or if it was even effective, but I didn't. Since she wanted it so much, I couldn't say no. I let her go after telling her not to overdo it.

I didn't know what it was that she wanted. I just hoped she wouldn't return as something like Dark Destiny Wing... In any case, not having Lotte wasn't detrimental to our success. As such, we entered the dungeon.

[You entered the SS ranked Event Dungeon, 'Frozen Castle.']

The moment I stepped inside the Event Dungeon, a bone-chilling wind blew. Of course, with my contract to Ruyue and the effect of Red Dragon Felixes' Cape, it only felt like a light breeze. However, it seemed that wasn't the case for my companions.

“C-C-C-C-C-C-Cold.”

“Father, I thought you were an undead.”

“I-I-I-I-I-I'm c-c-cold t-too.”

With that, Ye-Eun jumped in my embrace. Then, she cheered.

“Shin's cape is hot!”

“It's made out of a red dragon's leather.”

The moment Ye-Eun yelled, few more people clung to my cape. Pushing them off forcefully, I shouted.

“Didn't you buy cold weather clothes in the dungeon? Wear that instead!”

“But it's hard to fight in it.”

“If you're clinging onto me, neither of us can fight!”

In the end, everyone other than Hwaya and me wore thick cold weather clothes. Although I was fine thanks to my cape, it seemed Hwaya could protect herself with her flame ability.

“So, where are we?”

“It looks like the castle’s underground corridor. Everything’s made out of ice.”

I looked around. We were in a corridor about 5 meters wide and 10 meters tall. The flat walls had no windows. It was the perfect underground corridor where you’d expect to hear the cries of captured criminals. However, for an underground corridor, the ceiling was too high. Not to mention, everything was made out of ice. The floor, walls, ceiling, everything!

Although we entered all sorts of dungeons, the surroundings were always wide open and we had a spacious area to explore. However, although the place we were standing in was fairly spacious, it was clearly limited since we were caged in. If we took account the freezing energy that was continuously pouring in, the penalty we were suffering from couldn’t be said to be light.

We put Hwaya and Ludia, who were weak to close-ranged combat, in the middle, and quickly walked along the corridor. If the Event Dungeons we had entered so far all had the monsters attack us immediately, this dungeon was the complete opposite. Even after 30 minutes, we had not run into any monsters.

“Echoo!”

“Ludia, come here.”

“Un!”

After we walked in this cold for a while, Ludia, who had a weak constitution, kept sneezing. Even though we prepared ourselves for any environment we might find ourselves in, it seemed it wasn't enough.

Feeling sorry, I brought Ludia to my side. I couldn't give her my cape because it was bound to me, but she would be able to share the warmth by being near it. After Ludia grabbed the edge of my cape, she stopped sneezing. Instead, Hwaya and Ye-Eun's cheeks were puffed up.

“I'm cold, too... I'm so jealous.”

“Your favoritism is too strong. I don't like it.”

Ye-Eun, your condition is much better than Ludia's! And Hwaya, you're warmer than anyone else here! I wanted to argue, but since it would probably be a hassle, I didn't. I simply ignored them and firmly walked onward.

However, not long afterward, I hate to stop everyone. I had discovered blood splashed on the wall.

“There was a battle here.”

“It’s frozen.”

I looked around, but there was nothing other than the trace of blood. I told everyone to be on guard, then we continued onward as I actively used Mana Detection. After about 30 minutes, I suddenly felt a presence in front of me. It came with an extremely cold energy.

“Ludia, get back!”

I pushed Ludia into our formation. I pulled out my spear and manifested my aura. At the same time, I called Ruyue and Peika. The moment they were summoned, they floated up over my shoulders and emitted elemental power. Soon, the enemy made its appearance. It was a golem about 7 meters tall, made out of dozens of boulder-like ice. I finally understood. The ceiling had to be this high for this golem to appear.

[Guooooooooo!]

When the golem saw us, it roared and charged directly at us. However, it couldn’t have picked a worse opponent.

[Don’t touch Shin!]

[Guoooo...ooo!?!]

Just three words from Ruyue made the golem freeze in place. Dozens of ice crystals also rose up and stormed the golem. Shockingly, the ice forming the castle broke off readily and followed Ruyue's command. Hmm, could this place be a stage for Ruyue to shine?

However, the golem looked fine even after being struck by Ruyue's frightening attack.

[Guoooooooo!]

“Oh, I see.”

The flaw was that Ruyue couldn't deal huge damage to the golem as they were both had ice attribute. Ruyue, who was looking proud, quickly became dejected.

[Uuu, I have to protect Shin.]

“That was enough. Focus on blocking the golem's movements, Ruyue. Hwaya!”

“Eit!”

Hwaya threw a white flame at the golem. Even after colliding with the ice, the flame was not extinguished and continued to burn

until it completely swallowed the golem.

[Guooooooooo!]

In the end, the golem melted to a puddle of water, while Hwaya proudly puffed out her chests.

“Huhu, did you see that?”

“Yeah, good job.”

‘For someone who fainted just by seeing bugs...’ It seemed she forgot all about what happened in America. In any case, it was true that defeating the golem was easier with Hwaya. I adequately lifted Hwaya up and surveyed my surroundings with Mana Detection again.

“Ah, wait, let me go back.”

“It looks like we’ll run into monsters from now, so stay with me, Ludia.”

“Don’t call me Ludia! I’m going to be with Shin!”

“Come, it’s warm next to me, too, right?”

“... You big-breasted jealous witch.”

“... Hmph, it’s better than being a tiny-breasted jealous witch, right?”

“I, I’m still growing! The alphabet just changed, too!”

Please don’t say what alphabet changed... Like B, C... Ah, no, I shouldn’t be thinking about this!

After that, we fought giant bats, gargoyles, and golems all made out of ice. Ruyue immobilized them, and Hwaya’s flames violently melted all enemies even in this environment filled with ice.

Unfortunately, because the monsters were all made out of ice, they didn’t leave any corpses. However, we were happy because Mana Stones dropped with a higher chance. Mana Stones could be used as currency in both Earth and the dungeon.

We were most likely underground. After all, there were no windows anywhere. Almost to prove that I was right, the rooms along the corridor were all weapon storage rooms (full of golems), food storage rooms (full of golems), or prisons (full of golems).

After three hours, we explored the entire corridor. It seemed that we were on the lowest floor. We found a staircase going up. I couldn’t hide my excitement as things started looking more and more like an RPG game.

“Let’s first eat before we continue!”

“I knew you’d say that!”

Because everyone other than Hway and me were freezing, we all agreed to eat to warm ourselves up. I cooked ramen, using the Floor Shop’s special item, ‘Burned to White Ashes....’ With it, I had no reason to fear the Ice Castle, which even extinguished Hwaya’s flame in a few minutes. After all, even without fire, this magical item could heat up its content at the desired temperature for a desired amount of time!

However, things didn’t go the way I expected.

“Oh, no. The water won’t boil.”

“Damn it... Even though the pot is hot, the water won’t boil because it’s too cold outside!”

What kind of an absurd environment was this!? Even as I shook from this illogical situation, I refused to give up. If it the outside was too cold, I just had to make it warmer! I cleared some space around the pot and enveloped the area in chaos flame. Chaos flame wouldn’t be extinguished unless I wished for it, and it wasn’t just hot; it was scorching! Seeing the water boil, I became satisfied.

“You’re using a flame that could kill an SS ranked dungeon’s boss to boil water...”

“You shouldn’t say that Walker when you’re using that flame to

warm your body.”

With all the training expeditions I went with father, I had become a master of making ramen. Even while boiling 10 packs, I could maintain the noodles’ springy texture. I considered it a marvelous talent! Soon, when we were gathered around the Ice Castle’s underground corridor and eating ramen...

We sensed someone’s presence.

“Are you... going to eat that?”

Hwaya and I turned around with noodles in our mouth.

There, we saw the Witch of Silver Ice.

Chapter 160. The Rondo Of Scarlet Flame And Silver Ice (3)

After slurping down the noodles in my mouth, I scanned her. She was short, perhaps about 130 centimeters tall. Her face and build were small. She had long silver hair that flowed down to her waist and shined like transparent ice. Her skin was milky white, while her eyes were rosy pink. Silver hair and red eyes. I murmured as I held up my spear.

“Is she not human...?”

“It’s albinism, idiot.”

Hwaya put down the bowl of ramen she was holding and said as she knocked me on my head. Damn, it’s not like I knew everything!

I remembered with what Hwaya said. Albinism. It was the condition where one’s skin or hair appeared white due to lack of melanin. I knew about it too. Even though I knew, I’ve only seen it once in a lion in Africa!

“Are you France’s SS ranker?”

Hwaya asked. I also suspected that she was a ranker. Although she looked young, the overwhelming mana she possessed easily matched an SS ranker’s mana and even neared Hwaya’s and mine. It was also the reason I thought she wasn’t human. Really!

“I’m... Illina.”

“Hi. I’m Hwaya Mastiford.”

“... Hi.”

Seeing Hwaya wave her hand, the girl did the same. Then, she replied with her small pink lips. I couldn’t help but notice her refined doll-like features.

“Are you... eating that?”

“Do you want some, too?”

“... You’ll give it to me?”

Hwaya smiled and called her over.

“Come here. No matter how much mana you have, it’s better to be warm than cold.”

“I was told not to go near people.”

“You can’t go near people?”

“Un. They would die if I did.”

“Die? Who?”

While Hwaya was tilting her head curiously, I asked, feeling relieved.

“You’re Russia’s SS ranker, right?”

She nodded very candidly.

“Un.”

“Wait, Shin! Didn’t the prime minister say that Russia’s SS ranker was male!?”

“No, now that I think about it, I don’t think he said it clearly. I just kind of assumed. Plus, if she’s alone, she fits the description of Russia’s SS ranker perfectly. If you want to be sure, take off your choker.”

Hwaya took off her choker like I suggested. Then, she gestured for us to talk. I asked her again.

“Why do people die when you go near them?”

“Because... everyone becomes like this.”

Illina waved her hand. Then, ice crystals formed like fluttering flowers. The space her hand touched all turned into ice, which stayed afloat in the air.

I looked back at Hwaya. She nodded.

“Right, that was Russian.”

“Slurp, so Russia’s SS ranker has an ice ability...”

“She can’t control it...? sip”

“Second Master, I heard, slurp, kids who awaken abilities, nom... have trouble controlling their abilities.”

The others each slurped noodles or sipped on the soup as they murmured. I wish they’d choose between eating or talking. In any case, it seemed the prime minister had lied. Even so, how could they be so relaxed in front of such a powerful ability user!? I glared at them, then faced Illina again.

“Is that because you can’t control it?”

“Un. Because Illina can’t control it, everyone said to stay away.”

So that was why... From a while ago, she kept her distance without approaching us. However, she wasn’t moving away either.

In fact, as we conversed, she was getting closer to the pot surrounded by chaos flames. It was then that I realized three weeks had passed since she came here.

“What did you eat until now?”

“Golems.”

Golems... In other words, ice.

“What else?”

“Bats... and rats... and armors.”

In other words, ice. Ei!

“It was probably thanks to your mana, but I’m surprised you’re still alive. Come on, eat. We have lots.”

“But if I go... you’ll die...”

“No one here is weak enough to die from something like that. Don’t worry and come over.”

“Mom and Dad also said they wouldn’t die, but they did. The Ajusshi from TV also died. The oppa that said I was pretty also died. The Ajusshi who was mad at me died, and the people that

came in here also died after saying they wouldn't."

I became lost for words. She was staring intently at the pot, almost as if what she said had nothing to do with her. But that couldn't be the case. There wasn't anyone who would feel nothing after killing their parents.

But I understood why the Russian government wanted me to kill her. How could they control a girl who lost her parents because she couldn't control her powers? Plus, the people that entered this dungeon must have been S ranked at the very least, and they died too... She turned around, leaving me behind.

"Bye."

"Wait!"

I shouted instinctively, feeling that I had to stop her. I was confident that she wouldn't be able to hurt Hwaya or me, but from the way she was acting, it didn't look like she'd touch us easily. When I thought about the reason Illina recklessly came into the dungeon, I became more certain.

Before she walked away, I hurriedly summoned Ruyue. As soon as Ruyue saw her, she exclaimed in surprise.

[Wow! She's colder than Shin!]

"Ruyue, give this to her. Make sure that it doesn't get colder. Can

you do it?”

[Yeah! I can do it now!]

I took out a bowl, putting some ramen noodles in it along with chopsticks. Ruyue made it float with her power and carried it to Illina. Seeing the bowl float toward her, Illina widened her eyes and accepted it. Then, she became even more surprised.

“This... won’t freeze...! It’s hot!”

“Yeah, my friend helped me.”

“Ah...”

With her eyes still opened widely, she picked up the chopsticks. After struggling with it for a bit, she frowned and muttered.

“This is hard.”

“Hold on, I’ll get you a fork.”

The fork was also delivered with Ruyue’s power. After eating ramen for the first time, Illina stuck out her tongue.

“Spicy!”

“Ah, was it too spicy for a kid?”

“I’m not a kid!”

A small ice appeared above her tongue. Then, it became dew. So this was how she was drinking water! Although she did it effortlessly, it was nonetheless an amazing skill.

“Spicy. It’s spicy... but it’s hot. I couldn’t eat anything hot after Mom died...”

“...”

“Warm... Delicious.”

“... Sniffle”

“Damn, the ramen is too spicy! It’s making me cry!”

Father, if you’re going cry, do it quietly like Ludia and Sumire! Don’t make dumb excuses!

Illina then finished the ramen I gave her and even drank the entire soup. Looking at her reddened face, it was obvious that it was an expression of ‘I finished it because it was hot, but I can’t handle the spiciness.’

“Do you want ice cream?”

“I don’t like ice cream. It’s too cold.”

“Do you want caramel, then?”

“Un.”

While I delivered caramel to her with Ruyue, the party members were all watching this strange exchange. They were eating ramen while crying silently or wiping their eyes. Hwaya made an indiscernible expression and messaged me.

[It’s like you’re taming her!]

[... I can’t deny that.]

Illina finished the caramel as well. Her expression had become much more relaxed thanks to the caramel’s sweetness. At least, that was how it looked. Now was my chance.

I asked.

“Illina, why did you come here?”

“The ajusshi from TV told me that people wouldn’t die if I came here. I came in because I didn’t want to kill people... but other

people entered and died.”

“That son of a bitch.”

I still didn’t have the full picture. However, I somewhat understood. Illina caused many casualties, including her parents. The Russian government probably wanted to exploit her even if they had to make sacrifices. After all, any sacrifice was acceptable in front of the SS ranker title.

Of course, the sacrifices they had to make ended up being too big for them to handle. In the end, they decided to throw her away. ‘Luckily,’ an SS ranked gate had conveniently appeared. They probably hoped that she’d die on her own.

What I couldn’t understand was why Guardian sent a team of ability users to conquer the dungeon. Did they try to exploit the Russian government’s plan?

No, wait.

“Illina, when did you come in here?”

“A month and a half ago.”

It was about 3 weeks prior to when Guardian’s team entered. I see, if they couldn’t hear from her for three weeks, it made sense that they thought she was dead! However, that would mean Illina didn’t eat properly for a month and a half. So an SS ranker’s magic

power was this powerful! Illina's seemed to be especially special.

"Shin, we..."

"I know, I was thinking the same thing."

After answering Hwaya, I looked at Illina. She also looked at me. Her indescribably mystical rose-pink eyes seemed to be sucking me in.

"Illina, if you want—"

"Thanks."

While I was still talking, she suddenly bowed. I began to feel uneasy.

"Thanks to you, I had some pasta for the first time in a while."

"This isn't really pasta, but if you want, Illina, we can make you more."

"Kind people and good people... I don't want to freeze people like them anymore."

"Wait. We won't freeze even if you touch us! I can touch you directly! Plus, I have a friend that can control fire and heat—"

“This place is dangerous. You should run away.”

“Wait, Illina!”

“Bye.”

With that, she quickly disappeared. I couldn't feel her presence anymore. The only thing left was the bowl that had fallen to the ground.

“Damn, she just did a dine and dash...!”

“Shin, your ability to cloud the issue sometimes surprises me, but now isn't the time!”

Hwaya looked even angrier than me. She gritted her teeth and shouted.

“Russia, those arrogant bastards! They didn't call me, the greatest fire ability user, to control an ice ability user!? They'll pay for this!”

“Who's the one clouding the issue!?”

We argued for a while, forgetting about the matter with Illina. However, there was one thing we agreed on. It was that Guild Revival's tenth member had just been decided.

Chapter 161. The Rondo Of Scarlet Flame And Silver Ice (4)

After we finished eating and resting, we climbed the stairs. What awaited us was a large hall and giant chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. Of course, it was also made out of ice. In addition, there were thousands of ice bats hanging on the chandeliers. Although we took care of them easily, we became slightly worried, realizing that the castle might be much bigger than we anticipated.

“How long do we have left until uncleared Event Dungeons turn into Field Dungeons?”

“I don’t know the exact time, but it shouldn’t be long. Last time, they turned into Field Dungeons on the 61st day exactly.”

“And today is the 59th... No, 60th, right?”

In other words, if we assumed that it was the same as last time, we had less than 24 hours until the Event Dungeon turned into a Field Dungeon. I didn’t want to rush, but it was true that we had been taking it a bit leisurely.

“Should we split up?”

“No, we should prioritize our safety. We don’t know what’s going to come out, so we should stick together.”

Even if we were late and the dungeon turned into a Field Dungeon, it didn't mean that we would die. It was just that humanity would continually be afflicted with a hell hole. Mm, maybe the situation was serious after all.

Personally, I thought we could more easily clear the Ice Castle if we had Illina by our side. After all, her ability was practically made for this place. She didn't know that Event Dungeons could turn into Field Dungeons. If she did, she wouldn't have ignored me just now and would have lent her help. If we didn't clear the dungeon, the Field Dungeon might take countless people's lives.

With a glimmer of hope, I tried to detect Illina's mana with Mana Detection. Of course, I couldn't do something like that suddenly.

“In that case...”

“Can I burn the entire castle down with my flames...?”

“No, before we use such a brute force method, we need to see if there are any survivors. At the very least, France's SS ranker might be alive.”

“You don't think he got done in by Illina?”

“I hope that SS ranker didn't have an aggressive personality...”

Considering Illina's temperament, it was unlikely that she attacked people first. It was probably her overly sensitive self-

defense mechanism that poured in boundless mana of ice into whoever touched her. In other words, if France's SS ranker didn't try to touch her, he might still be alive.

However, if he tried to capture her, seeing as how Illina was fine, he probably froze to death somewhere in this castle. Thawing someone and bringing them back to life was something only possible in science fiction novels. It wasn't something we could do. Once someone froze, they were dead. If a ranker died in a place like this, that would be troublesome. Though, I wouldn't mind if it was Brightman or Bruno.

"Let's hurry up from now."

"Walking faster makes it colder..."

"Sorry, but bear with it."

High stats were made to last in situations like this. For a month for me and two months for the others, we cleared hundreds of Event Dungeons without rest and obtained over 200 bonus stat points.

We obtained the maximum amount of bonus stats from Event Dungeons ranked A+ or below, a feat that I would have thought was impossible. HP and MP. According to what I heard from Loretta some time ago, there were some things one gained just by leveling up, depending on what dungeon he was in. Even without taking that into consideration, 200 bonus stats equaled 40 levels worth of stats. Although we each had our own strengths, we all

had at least S ranked abilities. After gaining 200 bonus stats, it was safe to say that we had far surpassed the realm of human beings.

Ordinary people would have instantly frozen to death just by stepping in this place, but we only complained that it was cold. After Ye-Eun became an ability user and a dungeon explorer, leveling up and increasing her stats, she probably never felt too 'hot' or 'cold.' When she came to this castle and felt the coldness she hasn't felt for a long time, she probably exaggerated it a little.

“So bear with it.”

“So? You can't say, 'so bear with it,' when you didn't say anything beforehand!”

“...”

Damn, I was connecting my internal monologue with what I was saying aloud! But I thought everyone would still understand... Realizing that reality was different than my ideals, I despaired. Then, I explained to Ye-Eun about the reality of the 'cold' she was feeling.

On the castle's 1st floor, we ran into what Illina casually mentioned. The armor made out of ice. I couldn't understand. Living armors were supposed to pretend like normal armors, then attack unsuspecting adventurers. But what was it disguising itself for when this castle was only full of traps!?

In any case, there wasn't any time for questions. As spacious as the 1st floor was, it was filled with enemies, and had numerous ambushes set up.

“Eiit!”

“There are more coming to your left!”

“The chandelier is alive!”

“Uwoah, the wall is moving too!”

This better not end like, ‘Hey, the entire castle was a monster, too!’ If it did, I’m going to tear the castle apart!

Thankfully, the chandelier and the wall were both disguised ice mimics. There really wasn't anything we could trust in this castle.

At the same time, with us destroying every enemy in our path, the castle was getting noticeably cleaner. We ended up clearing the 1st floor in just 2 hours, much quicker than we took to clear the basement. Immediately afterward, we climbed up to the 2nd floor using the staircase we found on the west side of the castle's 1st floor.

The 2nd floor didn't have a hall but had a long corridor with many rooms. Surprisingly, I could feel the presence of humans from them. It didn't belong to Illina! I urged the others on.

“There are survivors, let’s hurry!”

“Shin, I’ll just burn the 2nd floor! I’m going to run out of mana, so make sure to catch me!”

“Yeah, thanks!”

Hwaya’s white flames spread out in all directions, and we ran toward the presence. The enemies we faced on the way were quickly taken care of by Hwaya’s Army of Flames. In exchange for our extremely quick advance, Hwaya was turning pale and was looking like she was about to faint.

[Guaaaaaang!]

After some time, bats, rats, paintings, chandeliers, and armors were all melted away by Hwaya’s flames. We thus ran to the presence without hindrance, and soon arrived in front of a large door.

[Uoooooooooooh!]

A giant golem standing in front of the door like a gatekeeper roared. It raised its giant ice mace but was melted by several white flame beasts before it could swing it even once. It must have been pretty strong as it took a majority of the beasts with him.

“Shin, I’m about to—”

“Hwaya!”

As I thought, it seemed the Army of Flames, especially one with her white flames, took a heavy toll on her body and mana. The moment the Army of Flames disappeared, Hwaya fell backward powerlessly. I hurriedly ran behind her and caught her. Her body was cold. It was the symptom of one being completely out of mana.

“You can’t move at all?”

“No...”

“I guess there’s no choice. It might be a bit uncomfortable, but I’ll—”

“I’ll carry you, unni! You must be more comfortable with a girl than a guy, too!”

“Ye-Eun, you...!”

When Hwaya responded to Ye-Eun touched, she silently smiled. Ye-Eun then made me get back and carried Hwaya on her back. To think they had developed such a close bond! I was touched. Next to me, however, Walker whispered to me seriously.

“Kang Shin, I think you should go die, kuuk!”

“Hm? What?”

“I feel complicated. I should cheer on unni, but...”

“N-No, it has to be Ludia. That way, there will be some hope for me...!”

“Eh...? What’s happening?”

When we opened the gate, the tragic scene in front of us was more than enough to shut out such trivial thoughts.

“My god.”

“So many people are...”

Frozen corpses were everywhere. It wouldn’t be surprising if someone mistook them as ice sculptures. There were at least 40 of them, each with different faces, but the same miserable expressions. Was this Illina’s doing? In front of the absurd horror, we couldn’t hide our shock.

“Shin!”

“Yeah, I know.”

As I thought, there was a survivor. He was in a miserable state, as he was frozen from his feet to his right under his nose. He noticed us and opened his eyes widely. He seemed to want to say something, but his mouth wouldn't open. In truth, I was shocked that he was still alive in such a state. I first made sure that there were no monsters nearby, then asked Ludia.

“Ludia, can you save him?”

“Not as he is now. We have to thaw him.”

To think we'd actually have to do it! In any case, it was probably better to move him to a safe area before we...

KRRRRRR.

A loud sound rang out. When we turned around, the door we opened was shut tightly. Plus, the surrounding had gotten even colder, so much so that even I could feel it. Was I mistaken? When I was about to move the man, father called out.

“Son, something's not right.”

“What do you mean, father?”

“My fingertips are freezing.”

“That's serious...!”

I immediately turned around and checked on father's status. Although he spoke nonchalantly, it wasn't just father's problem. Aside from me and Hwaya, everyone's hands and feet were slowly freezing. In other words, the frozen corpses weren't caused by Illina, but by some other existence in this space!

[Guuuuuuuu....!]

[Kuhaa...]

The corpses I thought were dead began to move while making strange noises. The Awakened's corpses were being used!

“Hwaya, how's your mana!?”

“I still need more time before it'll fill up!”

“Mana Elixir! Ludia!”

“I can't open... my inventory...!”

Damn! If I could, I would open Ludia's inventory for her. However, inventories could only be opened by their owners. Could this be considered a status effect? If it was, I could dispel it with Orc Lord's Warcry! However, after I thought about it, I realized that although Orc Lord's Warcry could cancel frostbite or paralysis from the cold, it could not prevent someone from being frozen.

Plus, if I super-armored them haphazardly and forced them to move their frozen bodies, it could have devastating effect afterward. I didn't want to imagine such a thing happening.

In that case, I could only do something about it myself! Frozen corpses. Seeing the ice zombies closing in, I bit my lips and dispersed my mana outward. No matter who or what was freezing us, something had to be caught!

Then...

[Humans... Humans always worry about their own lives in critical situations, so why do they all pretend to care about others?]

A voice rang out. It was the voice of a boy that hadn't passed his puberty. It was a cold, frozen voice. I raised my head.

[What do you think, human's Hero?]

A pretty boy, who could be mistaken as a girl, was right in front of me. With a sour expression, he sometimes pulled on his shirt with his hands, as if he didn't like anything.

[Well, you probably can't hear or see.]

When I was about to say something, the closed door suddenly opened. Illina, who had disappeared three hours ago, was standing there.

“Don’t... kill him.”

[You...?]

When the door opened, the boy became flustered and turned around. When I saw her, a relieved smile appeared on my face. I could feel her sincerity. Seeing her step up for someone who only gave her a bowl of ramen, I became certain that we didn’t think wrong.

I could feel the victory in the air. To make that victory more certain and to turn it into something happy, I took action.

I decided to use the skill points I had been saving up.

Author’s note:

The answer has already been given!

Chapter 162. The Rondo Of Scarlet Flame And Silver Ice (5)

[Why did you come, Ice Girl?]

“That person... don’t kill him.”

[To achieve your goal of not hurting humans with your ability, everyone here has to die!]

The boy spread out his arms and encompassed all members of Revival. Surprisingly, even though Illina couldn’t have heard the boy, she instantly frowned.

“Don’t... kill them...”

[I see, I thought you were different, but in the end, you are also a human. A weak human, a human that can’t keep her vows, a human that blames others for their lack of ability!]

“Don’t... kill them!”

Along with Illina’s shout, a freezing wind blew inside the room. The first ones to get affected were the zombies running toward us. Though they were already frozen, they got stuck to the floor, then became cut to pieces by blade-like ice crystals that appeared in mid-air. Her ability was truly powerful and unstable. That is, it was affecting us as well.

“Ruyue!”

[Un!]

The moment the boy’s power wavered, I summoned Ruyue. She seemed to instantly realize what she had to do, as she protected everyone with her ability.

“Can you thaw them?”

[It’s hard. We need to do something about that guy first!]

“Alright... leave it to me!”

While Ruyue’s elemental power surged up to protect all party members, the boy, who was fighting Illina, opened his eyes widely after seeing Ruyue.

[An Elementalist!? Kuk... So you could hear me! I hate you even more now, die!]

The boy’s shout almost seemed like a shriek, as the room itself trembled. The freezing energy inside the room became stronger, clashing with Illina’s power and making it hard for me to see anything. Both Illina’s and the boy’s energy was immense, and Ruyue was busy trying to block their energies.

It would be harder to hold out for long with just Ruyue' power. If I didn't do it now, it would be too late.

I immediately took action. It was simple, as I just had to distribute 3 skill points to each skill.

[You mastered mid-rank Spirit Aura! In addition to weapons and defensive equipment, you can now infuse elementals into your own body, amplifying your physical abilities!]

[You learned high-rank Spirit Aura! While active, you can freely use mid-rank elemental magic. As the skill level increases, the amount of mana needed to infuse and maintain elementals in your body decreases and your ability amplification increases.]

I somewhat expected it, but with high-rank Spirit Aura, it was really possible to infuse elementals into my own body. Although it would be good to have my weapon use Spirit Aura, I could now use chaos flame-attribute aura. As such, bar for a few special occasions, I didn't need to use Spirit Aura. It was good that I could now use Spirit Aura with my body.

[You mastered mid-rank Elemental Control! Elementals not connected to your soul will listen to you attentively and will follow your orders if they do not have a master.]

[You learned high-rank Elemental Control! You can draw out the potential of your contracted elementals to their maximum. You can command free elementals as if they are your own.]

Finally...

[You mastered mid-rank Elemental Contract! You can perfectly draw out the true power of your contracted elementals!]

[You learned high-rank Elemental Contract! Your contracted elementals' are released from high-ranked seals, and all elemental-related techniques are greatly strengthened. The number of elementals you can contract increases by one.]

Then, the wind blowing inside halted. When the wind disappeared, only Illina's ability remained, but soon, it was stopped.

The boy looked back at me with a flustered expression. I grinned at him.

[E....Eh?]

“Did you just notice?”

[You... You can see me.]

“Yeah.”

[Im... Impossible.]

The boy took a few steps back. I then heard relieved voices from behind me.

“W-Whew, I’m alive.”

“I don’t know what you did, but thanks, son.”

My companions, who were slowly freezing, were now thawing. Someone who could calm Illina’s ability and bring about this change... I glanced at Ruyue. Ruyue, who had materialized without my knowledge, was not in her wolf-form. Rather, she had the form of a girl, who had wolf ears and wolf tails... Huh?

With a small face and delicate features, she looked just like a 17 year old girl. Perhaps because she was originally a wolf, she was incredibly well-developed. Her beautiful silver hair that looked like a wolf’s manes was exuding a unique charm. Did beast-type elementals take human form when their high-ranked seals are

undone?

Thankfully, she was wearing a dress that was seemingly made out of leather. Seeing me tilt my head curiously, Ruyue widened her eyes, which were just as blue as when she was a wolf.

[Shin, I became weird!]

“Yeah, I thought you’d say that. You’re the one who thawed the others, right?”

[Yeah! I suddenly became stronger!]

“Good job.”

[Hehehe. Praise me more!]

Ruyue’s ears fluttered happily as she ran into my embrace. Without thinking, I hugged her back and patted her head. Then, after realizing what had just happened, I became flustered. Although I had done it without much thought when she was a wolf, now that she had turned into a girl, the softness of her body and the stares I was getting were completely different.

Hwaya Mastiford, you’re looking at me like I’m some criminal! I’m only being intimate with my elemental as her master!

The one that seemed to be most in shock was the boy.

[She... evolved!]

“Yeah, in a way, just for you.”

[A-As I thought, you're... but...!]

The boy shouted.

[My contractor is already dead!]

Damn! I see, if that wasn't the case, it wouldn't make sense that an elemental like him would be cooperating with monsters! Perhaps his contractor was... Wait, no. Something's strange... Ei! I can solve that later! That wasn't the important thing right now!

“Just because you lost your contracted master, it doesn't mean you can't contract another one.”

[My master will only be Pesina! Other than her, no one can touch me... Plus, you're a human! Throughout the long history, human Elementalist has never...]

“Don't worry. I'm definitely an Elementalist, and you're definitely connected to me.”

My very existence confused him, and at the same time, charmed him. That was what soul connection was. Just like how the

maddened Ruyue returned to being a pure elemental when we met, now that this free elemental realized he was connected to me, he couldn't go back to how it was before.

[No... I hate you!]

“It's fine. I'll listen to everything you want to say.”

[No! Go away, I hate humans! Humans, who took Pesina away from me, should all die with monsters! Someone like you isn't my contractor!]

As I thought, some bastards had harmed his contractor! It was then that he did something completely unexpected.

“Shit, Illina!”

“Ah!”

The free elemental had charged toward Illina, who was standing in front of the door. Damn, was he trying to forcefully possess her!? Although Illina couldn't see or hear the free elemental, considering how she noticed that there was someone else here the moment she came in the room, it seemed she could feel his mana. Of course, that was an amazing feat.. Regardless, if she couldn't detect his body, it would be hard to block him.

I instantly activated Divine Speed and ran forward. Since my companions had already thawed, they should be able to protect

themselves against the zombies. What I had to do now was to protect Illina, who had come to save me and my friends.

[Kuk! I will not contract a human! I will kill you soon, just you watch!]

“Shin!”

“N-No!”

“Yes!”

Several shouts filled the room. The result was quickly shown.

I reached Illina first, embracing her and rolling on the ground. As such, the elemental left the room without being able to reach his target. As the zombies had been swiftly taken care of, the only hostile thing left in the room was the freezing energy being emitted endlessly. Of course, Ruyue was easily controlling the freezing energy, preventing it from affecting everyone, and Ludia was hurriedly healing everyone who had almost become frozen.

Illina, who was in my embrace, opened her eyes widely.

As we were sprawled on the ground, I quickly got up and dusted her off. Meanwhile, Illina simply stared at me in shock.

Once I got done dusting her off and stood up straight, she

checked that I was fine, then tapped my arms like she couldn't believe it. She opened her trembling lips.

“Y-You won't freeze...”

“I told you I won't.”

“You really won't freeze...?”

“Of course.”

Her mana was unnaturally enormous. It could be that staying in this dungeon for over a month had increased her ability, but regardless, the amount of mana she had neared the amount Hwaya and I had. She was comparable to me, even after I cleared so many Event Dungeons and completed Event Raids! The energy she was emitting was undoubtedly not something ordinary people could endure. It was easy to see that it was hard for her to live a normal life.

“It'll be fine if you're with me.”

“Really...?”

“Shin, can you not leave me out of it?”

For someone who just recovered, Hwaya strut toward us. Illina became startled and tried to back away, but Hwaya quickly placed

her hand on her head.

“Huhu, huhuhu! See, Shin! I won’t freeze either! It’s not just you!”

“Yeah, I can’t really win against your competitiveness.”

“Excuse you, it’s not because of competitiveness. I’ve been wanting to pat her the moment I saw her! Remember, the first one to pat her was none other than... Mm? D-Don’t cry! Sorry, did you not like it?”

“Hic, Hic...”

Oh, no. Illina’s red eyes were tearing up. I jokingly said to Hwaya.

“How can you make a little girl cry?”

“Y-You...!”

“Uu, uuaang...”

Illina began to cry with a muffled voice. From it, I could feel her built up pain. She must have been crying like this all this time. Without anyone knowing, she must have cried inwardly to herself. Ever since the day she lost her parents...

I made eye contact with Hwaya. She gestured with her chin, but I shook my head and gestured with my chin. After all, a girl should be better than a guy at consoling a child.

Hwaya smiled as if she couldn't help it, and held Illina with both arms.

“There, there.”

“Uuuu... Hic...!”

“Let it all out. Illina, thank you for saving us. You're a good girl.”

“Uuu... uuuuung!”

“Good, good...”

Well, she's all ready to be a mom! Seeing Hwaya perform better than I expected, I turned around to check how others were doing. Then, Illina held my sleeve. For the record, 'held' was just the way I put it. To be exact, a stream of ice had reached out from her hands to my shoulder part of my armor and pulled it.

“I-Illina...?”

“Hic, hic...”

“She’s asking where you’re running away.”

“Is that what your ears heard?”

With no other choice, I approached her. Illina, who was hugging Hwaya, reached out with one arm and embraced me. Although I stuck to Hwaya’s body unintentionally, it seemed she didn’t mind. Instead, the people watching us did. I, of course, ignored them. Illina was the top priority, right now.

I reached out and patted Illina’s back. Her tears seemed to have subsided as well. Because of how much she cried, her red eyes and turned even redder. Then, she murmured.

“Daddy.”

“Hm?”

“Daddy.”

“Uh, mm... Illina? Sorry, but I’m still—”

While I wore a dumbfounded expression, Illina turned to Hwaya and murmured.

“Mommy.”

“M-Mommy!? Kuk, no, mmm...!”

“Mommy.”

“... Are you calling us twice to assure yourself?”

“Daddy and Mommy...”

Illina murmured and buried her face between us. My eyes met Hwaya's, and we dropped our shoulders and gave up. I had a suspicion that we would need to carry this title for a while.

Early autumn, I, Kang Shin, 21 years old, had gotten a daughter. A foreigner at that!

Author's note:

Someone's going to say, “Another harem member!?” But I will say, “No, elementals aren't harem members!” Since their souls are connected, they're already one without needing to hit the bases...

After being unsealed, Ruyue went from a wolf to a human. Here's a question. What about Peika...?

Hint – Remember the moment of their contract.

By the way, after this part, we will have the popularity contest I

talked about! We'll also be going back to the dungeon.

Chapter 163. The Rondo Of Scarlet Flame And Silver Ice (6)

Although I wanted to wait until Illina fully calmed down, I was also anxious to save the surviving ability user. As such, as soon as Illina's crying subsided, I patted her head and told her, "Illina, I'm sorry, but there's someone I need to save. Stay with Hwaya for a bit."

"Ina."

"Ina?"

"That's what Mommy and Daddy calls me."

"... Okay, Ina. Wait a bit."

"Un."

After hearing me call her Ina, she let me go. Worrying that there was possibly no way out of this situation, I approached the ability user with worry. Although everyone else turned into ice zombies and shattered, he was still alive. However, he was in a much worse situation than before, as he was frozen up to his eyes. Thankfully, Ruyue's ability had gotten stronger at just the right time, and the freezing had stopped.

When I approached the others, Walker was the first to speak to

me teasingly.

“Oh, here comes the father.”

“Walker, if you want to fight, come. I’ll be happy to crush you.”

“Sorry, but I’m not cruel enough to injure a man with a daughter. Protect your home, Kang Shin.”

“Walkeeeeeeeer...!”

On the other hand, Ludia shook her hand and denied what Walker said.

“I won’t accept it. She isn’t my daughter.”

“Sorry, but you’re not my wife either.”

“I want to pat Illina, too... Can I?”

“You’ll probably freeze instantly.”

“Why is it only Shin and Hwaya unni...”

Well, I could understand where Ye-Eun was coming from. Ina was small and cute and looked just like a princess from a fairy tale. Although people with albinism were suffering from a pain that

people without albinism couldn't understand, with how pretty Ina was, it might be considered a blessing than a curse.

Plus, with the amount of mana that rivaled an SSS rank's, she couldn't be feeling the pain ordinary people with albinism had. Although she had lost a lot in return, it would be different from now. I wanted to make sure that it would be.

In any case, I had to treat this ability user that was on the verge of death.

“Ruyue, can you bring him back to normal with your ability?”

[Un! But that yellow-head needs to help me.]

Ruyue answered energetically and pointed at Ludia. To use her beautiful blonde hair to call her yellow-head... How bold, Ruyue!

“Ludia, help. We need to save him.”

“...”

Because of my previous clear-cut refusal, Ludia's cheeks were puffed up. Even though she didn't answer me, she approached us, then pointed her staff at the ability user.

“What should I do, Wolf?”

[I'm Ruyue! I'm not Wolf!]

“Yeah, Wolf. So what do I do?”

[Shin, this yellow-head is calling me Wolf!]

“Can we just hurry up? If he really dies, it won't be funny...!”

Although Ludia and Ruyue kept bickering, they still cooperated to heal the ability user. As Ruyue slowly thawed him, Ludia invigorated his mana and healed his injuries. Surprisingly, after a while, he began to operate his mana to help them, while his eyes were still closed. I wasn't sure when he was frozen, but he really was...

About 10 minutes afterward, the man slowly opened his eyes after regaining his appearance. He was a handsome middle-aged man with blonde hair mixed with white streaks and grey eyes. This must be what people mean when they say that people ‘aged well.’

“Thank you for helping me. I thought I'd die here.”

“I'm Revival's Yeon Hwawoo.”

“Ah, the greatest hero of this century. You're even better looking in person. Your eyes look soft but show strong will. It's an honor to meet you. I'm Laz Michel, France's SS ranker.”

He reached his hand out to me. When I held his hand, I instantly realized. He was a physical reinforcement type ability user!

“Was everyone in here your comrades?”

“There were others, but most of them were killed by the ice monsters.”

As he said that, he stealthily stole a glance at Ina. Anyone other than me wouldn't have noticed. Although he didn't say anything aloud, I knew what he was hinting. I couldn't help but thank him for being considerate.

Although he was being frozen to death, he had seen everything that happened. He knew Ina didn't want to kill people, and probably wouldn't touch the subject if we could control her ability.

“I'd like to express my gratitude again. Really, thank you. I thought I'd end my short life in this place. I still have many things I want to enjoy!”

“It's great that we could save you before it was too late. I'm sorry to say this to someone who just came back from the verge of death, but can you help us clear the gate? Having a powerful and reliable ability user such as yourself would be of great help to us.”

“Of course. In fact, I'd like to ask if I could help. I'm not the type of person who can sit still after being hit. I won't be satisfied if I don't get my revenge.”

He grinned and held up his sword, which he had been holding even whilst he was frozen. For a one-handed sword, the sword's body was wide and thick. It was a bastard sword.

“I’m confident in my ability to fight with my body.”

“Good to have you on board.”

Once our introduction was over, Hwaya approached us with Ina in her arms. To be exact, Ina wouldn’t let go of her. Now that she was done crying, Ina was practically in siege mode. Hwaya spoke with a voice mixed with happiness and distress.

“Get her off me!”

“Why? You guys look nice together. Better than her clinging on me.”

“Mommy’s warm.”

“Well, she is a fire ability user...”

Seeing Hwaya and Ina together really put a smile on my face, but there was something I had to tell Ina.

“Ina.”

“Un.”

When I called her, she seemed to have noticed that my tone was serious, as she looked up and stared at me.

“The guy that ran away. Have you talked to him before?”

“Un. He talked in an ice caterpillar form.”

As I thought, he could forcefully possess living creatures. It was something only mad elementals were capable of. Of course, once a mad elemental successfully possessed a creature, non-Elementalists would be able to talk to them too.

“He lost someone important to him and hurt others because of it. I want to catch him before he makes any bigger mistakes.”

“Is he like me?”

“No, even if he’s gone mad, he hurt and killed many people. He’s not like Ina, who ran away because you didn’t want to kill anyone.”

“But I killed lots of people, too. Everyone said that Ina is a bad kid. That the dead Mommy and Daddy would hate me, too.”

Damn, everything she said was making me cry. What bastard said

that to Ina? I tightened my grip on the spear and contemplated about what to say to Ina. However, I couldn't come up with anything. Hwaya hugged Ina in my stead and stroked her gently.

“Ina isn't a bad kid. No one is bad. You just couldn't control the power entrusted to you. I'm sure that Mommy and Daddy who passed away wouldn't hate Ina.”

“Really?”

“Of course. I'm Ina's Mommy now. Don't you believe Mommy?”

“I do... Daddy, too?”

She was acting like Ina's mom like it was natural. How funny. But since she consoled her perfectly, I let it slide. I also stroked Ina's head.

“Of course, Ina. No parent could ever hate their child.”

When I turned around, father silently gave me a thumbs up. It was a bit embarrassing to say this in front of father, but... I was right, no parent could ever hate their child. A parent would love even a hateful child. That was just how parents were. I was sure that parents had committed a huge crime against their children in their past lives. Otherwise, their unconditional love couldn't be explained.

Eit, this is too cheesy and embarrassing!

“Ina doesn’t have to kill anyone now. We’ll help you. Ina, I want to help him, too. Humans were the ones who made him turn mad. Since I’m a human, I have to bring him back.”

All elementals were born with blank slates. When they met their contractors, they would gain deeper emotions, but when their contractors died, or more specifically when their contractors met a tragic death like that boy’s, the shock would easily turn them mad. It wasn’t easy for elementals to go mad, but when they faced humans’ desires, it would happen more easily. Perhaps that’s why the number of human elementalists had decreased.

Once an elemental turned mad, it was incredibly hard to bring it back to normal. Unless one could perfectly suppress it and drain it of all of its energy, there were only two ways to bring an elemental back to normal. That was to kill the elemental or to find a new contractor.

When I first met Ruyue, I had planned to drain her energy and beat her until she snapped out, but after realizing that my soul was connected to hers, I contracted her. When I saw the boy, I realized that I was connected to him as well. After all, he wasn’t materialized at the time.

To maintain a materialized form without a contractor, an elemental had to use his own elemental power. That was fine if the elemental was in a place full of elemental power like Fairy Garden, but that wasn’t the case now. As such, he did not materialize and used the environment to its fullest to attack us. His true strength should be much stronger.

That said, I couldn't understand why unique elementals I met after Peika were all mad elementals. Not to mention, they were all connected to me. Perhaps... Ei, let's think about that later, too.

"To do that, Ina, we need your strength."

"My strength?"

"Yeah. I haven't told Ina yet, but this dungeon will soon appear on Earth."

"Really? What should I do? I don't want to kill people anymore."

"You just have to stay with us. I told you, right? I'll help you so that you don't hurt anyone else."

"Ah."

Ina's expression became bright. Did she not believe me before? It seemed I would need to say things to her multiple times. With a bitter smile, I continued.

"When this dungeon moves to Earth, we probably won't be able to meet him anymore. When more people die, it will be too late to go back. He's running away from me right now. He must have really loved his previous contractor, but if we don't capture him, he will hurt more people. I want to stop that from happening."

“We have to catch him?”

“Yeah, Ina. Can you help?”

“Un.”

... Perhaps, she didn't need long explanations. Now that I thought about it, she probably wasn't mature enough to understand everything I was saying. I didn't know why I was explaining so seriously to a little girl. Ina suddenly raised her hand. I tilted my head and called her, as I couldn't understand what she was doing.

“Ina?”

“I caught him.”

What? I looked at Hwaya. Then, I realized that the place we were in wasn't the same as the previous place. We were undoubtedly in a giant hall in the castle's 2nd floor, but the place we were in had windows to the castle's outside. Seeing the height we were in and the ceiling that looked like a dome, I thought...

“Could this place be... the highest floor!?”

Everyone, including Hwaya, Guild Revival's members, and France's SS ranker Laz Michel, had all been teleported. Wait, does

that mean...!? I looked around. Then, I was dumbfounded.

[You're already here... Kuk!]

[Girl, you changed your mind...?]

I saw the elemental making a shocked expression and an army of ice armors filling up the area. What was most shocking was the throne on the innermost part of the room, and a giant ice armor sitting on it like a king.

For an armor made out of ice, it was adorned with intricate engravings, which were glowing with red light. As I expected, this dungeon's boss wasn't the elemental!

The giant armor looked at us and slowly got up. On his hand was a truly giant ice hammer.

[Come. The Eternal Army will not fear thee.]

Seeing it full of spirit, I turned around and looked back at Ina. Couldn't you have said something!? Without knowing how I was feeling, she puffed out her chest proudly.

"I can go anywhere I want inside here."

"Yeah, good job..."

Of course, I couldn't blame her. I planned to raise my child with nothing but compliments!

"If anyone's not prepared, tell me. Ina should be able to teleport us again."

"I'm good."

"Same!"

"O power of the earth, bless us! Lend us your power! O Mitarus, bless us!"

"Haha, my targets are all here!"

It seemed everyone was fully prepared. That was also the case for our enemies.

[Good, I will kill you here and now. All of you humans!]

[Don't act wildly on your own. Maintain your elegance. Soldiers, open your eyes.]

The ice armors slowly got up. As they stood tall with their weapons, it was easy to tell they were much more orderly, completely different than the ones we saw before. They were undoubtedly much stronger, too. I'm sure that Ice Castle's environment had something to do with it, but each ice armor was

overwhelmingly stronger than any of the bugs we met in Insect World. Now, there were about 200 of them. Even I couldn't stay lax in such a situation.

“It's going to get wild.”

“Daddy, catch him. I'll catch the rest.”

“What, Ina?”

“Eit.”

Ina widened her eyes in Hwaya's arms and grasped her hands in mid-air. Then, all 200 ice armors suddenly stopped. Could it... be?”

“Go back!”

Even if you command them like they're your pets... What? All 200 ice armors crumbled together!

[You really are strong, Ice Witch! But I won't lose!]

The giant armor gritted its teeth and shouted. Shockingly, the armors began to rise again. I could feel a frightening amount of mana moving. However, Ina pushed it back easily. As I thought, Ina was incredibly strong in this place...!

“I’ll take care of them, Daddy.”

“Yeah, thanks!”

“We’ll handle the boss. You stop the elemental!”

“Leave it to me!”

I left the armors to Ina and Ina to Hwaya. Then, I stared at the elemental floating above and glaring at me.

“You should be feeling it, too. Stop running away!”

[I told you... Pesina is my only contractor!]

He shouted in anger and emanated pressure in all directions. Kuk, I somewhat considered it with what happened in the previous room, but he really was a wind elemental! In any case, it was best to stop an elemental with another elemental. I called my partners.

“Peika, Ruyue!”

[You called?]

[Un!]

I turned around. Once unsealed, it seemed they could maintain

their appearance while they were in their spiritual form, as a miniature-sized wolf-eared girl and a dragon with beautiful scales were staring at me.

... Dragon!?

Author's note:

Let me explain! This chapter had a lot of explanations, so the author put in 160% of the normal chapter length to make up for it!

Also, remember what Peika said when she and Shin first met? About Shin's soul being similar to hers!?

This arc will end next chapter. Will a new elemental contract Shin!?

Chapter 164. The Rondo Of Scarlet Flame And Silver Ice (7)

“Peika, what’s with your appearance?”

[My appearance? What do you me... Kyaaaak! When was the seal released!?]

Seeing Peika screaming, I thought back to the moment we made our contract. Peika had said that the small dragon tattoo on her cheek was a creature closest to the essence of my soul. However, when I contracted Ruyue, the tattoo that appeared on her back wasn’t a creature, but some geometric shape. At the time, I just thought it was different for a mad elemental, but...

“You... Did you lie?”

[L-Lie? ... Y-Yes.]

I was told elementals couldn’t lie, but everything was a lie! Wait, come to think of it, elementals were the ones who told me that! Those liars!

[But I thought you’d hate me if my real body was a dragon!]

“Ai...”

[Do you hate me? Un? Do you hate me?]

“Of course not. No matter what you guys really are, you’re still my precious elementals. You don’t need to worry about that.”

Peika looked noticeably relieved as she hugged my arm. It seemed coiling around my arm was her way of expressing affection. In truth, she looked very similar to a snake. If it wasn’t for the two horns on her head and her marvelous scales, I wouldn’t have been able to tell.

The wind elemental, who was watching us, was acting strangely.

[Hateful... You took her away from me, but you’re together with elementals!]

“I’m not the one who took Pesina away from you!”

[Unforgivable! All humans are the same. Humans took my Pesina away from me! They should all die!]

It’s getting worse! I quickly summoned Talaria and flew up. At the same time, I infused Ruyue into my body since she couldn’t fly when she materialized. For an instant, I felt my body getting cold. However, I could also feel myself getting stronger.

[Wow, I became one with Shin!]

“Uh, yeah... Certainly, I feel much stronger.”

I somewhat dodged Ruyue's awkward comment and focused on my next duty. It was to materialize Peika.

[C-Can I materialize in my human form?]

“Whichever one is stronger.”

[Uuu. O-Okay.]

Soon, a black dragon appeared in mid-air. With a body length of about 15 meters, she truly looked like a dragon from Eastern legends. The two horns on her head were continuously letting off sparks, and her black scales were also brimming with lightning.

Looking at Peika's awe-inspiring look, I widened my eyes. The amount of mana she was using up was completely different than before. Ruyue also used more mana after she was unsealed, but it wasn't to this degree.

Peika wasn't completely unsealed. What was she really? I swallowed my question and hurriedly took out a highest-grade Mana Potion from my inventory and drank it. Although I was curious, that wasn't my priority.

[Die... die!]

[Fine, I'll beat you up until you're almost dead!]

It seemed she wasn't happy with being in her dragon form, as Peika shouted angrily and charged at the elemental. He tried to blow her away with his wind, but Peika snorted and shot out lightning from her mouth. The lightning easily annihilated the wind mixed with freezing energy and continued to hurl toward him. Peika shouted.

[Try materializing!]

[You think I can't!? But if I do...!]

[If you're going to be stubborn and refuse to accept the world's greatest master, you better bet your life on it!]

Peika was emitting an overwhelming pressure. The endless lightning shooting out from her body became spears that rushed to the wind elemental, and he could only run away. Even though he posed great danger to us in the 2nd floor, he couldn't do anything now.

Would I have won if I just materialized Peika before? How did she get so strong!? No, I can't just stay here and let Peika do everything!

“Let's go before Peika really kills him!”

[Un!]

I kicked off the air with Talaria's power and charged toward the elemental. In my hand was the Chaotic Spear.

"If you don't want to talk, I'll do it your way!"

[Kuu... No, noooooo!]

[Master, he's materializing!]

His presence suddenly became bigger. The spear I thrust out was caught by the elemental's hand.

[This... This is why I hate it!]

A girl's voice rang out. At the same time, a giant wall of wind pushed toward me. I formed chaos flames and pushed away from the elemental's hand. I blocked the wall of wind and murmured in shock.

"You... I see."

An elemental that refused to materialize. Elements might not want to materialize for multiple reasons. I thought that a free elemental would refuse to do so as it didn't want to waste its elemental power. That was what I thought.

But that wasn't the case for him. It was obvious from his appearance.

Long ears and clear facial features, a slim, yet somewhat voluptuous, body. It was undoubtedly the appearance of a female elf. Boundless elemental power and mana. He possessed a mana that an elemental could not possibly have.

“You fused.”

[Yeah, yeah, yeah! It’s because of you humans! You tricked me by saying it’ll help defeat the Demon Lord!]

It was only obvious that he would go mad. Throughout history, the fusion of an elementalist and an elemental only brought about tragedy! This fusion was an evil magic, completely different from infusing an elemental into one’s body like I was doing with Spirit Aura.

It was unlikely that an elf would do such a thing, so just he said, humans had to be involved. How irritating. First Ruyue, now him. Innocent elementals were hurt. The humans who made him like that must have died. There wasn’t anyone for me vent my anger.

[Do you realize now? DO YOU!?!]

[Why are you getting mad at my master! He’s innocent, you idiot!]

The reason ‘he’ kept a male appearance was probably to not subconsciously go back to that appearance. Fusing an elemental

and an elemental was already horrible. Whoever did so couldn't have made their sex different, as that would only increase uncertainties.

[Pesina died in pain! I hate humans, I really hate humans!]

“Kuk!”

Although it was unstable, the fused power of an elemental and an elemental was truly powerful. The wind power instantly overwhelmed Peika's lightning and pushed her back. However, I gritted my teeth and charged toward him... no, her.

“How long do you plan on tormenting her!?”

[I'm not tormenting Pesina!]

“Then remember your name! Let her go!”

I swung my spear. The wind arrows hurling toward me were all burnt away, as I continued to fly toward her.

[No, I don't want to lose her forever!]

“Are you going to torment her for eternity for a stupid reason like that, Sharana!?”

Although I was the one that said it, I couldn't help but stop in shock. It was the same for the elemental... Sharana.

[Ah, aaaaah!]

She screamed. She suddenly began to shine. Then, I remembered how I knew her name. Right, in the dream I had to awaken my ability, I wasn't just with Peika and Ruyue. Sharana was there, too!

“God, to think Ciara would actually be helpful...”

When I fought Ruyue, I barely made her remember her name after beating her up. Back then, I couldn't remember the dream at all. Feeling somewhat strange, I approached her.

[Ah, aaaah.... Shara, Sharana...]

“Sharana!”

The moment I shouted her name, something I didn't expect happened.

[Pesina, let's stop. This person isn't your enemy... He's my new master.]

A new clear voice rang out. She was calling me Master. It was then that I realized I had been gravely mistaken. The one I was facing wasn't Sharana. I should have realized when she attacked

her contractor.

She was Pesina, who was pretending to be Sharana.

[Pesina, you can go back now. Look, someone who could save us came.]

[Sharana, can you believe a human? I can't do it!]

[Pesina, I don't want to see you in pain... He's right. We have to go back when we can.]

Seeing two voices taking turns to talk in one body was somewhat surreal. I simply watched them quietly. Perhaps because Sharana spoke out, Pesina sounded a lot calmer.

[Sharana... Is that okay with you?]

[He's a good person. Look, he has two elementals that can materialize.]

Her gaze fell on me. From beyond the elf body, I could feel the elemental, Sharana's eyes.

[But you're human, like the humans who tormented me and Sharana!]

“I don’t have a hobby of tormenting my elementals. Isn’t that obvious from seeing me?”

[But, I...!]

[Pesina, let’s stop hurting and rest. Okay?]

Sharana’s words silenced Pesina. Although my companions were fighting around us, the area we were in was quiet. Even the strong winds had subsided, as we were waiting for her answer.

Finally, Pesina opened her mouth.

[I’m...]

[You’re free now, Pesina.”

[If Sharana’s... okay with it...]

[It’s for Pesina and me.]

[Okay...]

With a voice of resignation, she reached her hand out toward me. While Peika was coiled up and watching us, I caught her hand.

[I’ll trust you one last time, Human.]

“Leave it to me, Pesina.”

[Okay. Now, I'll rest...]

Pesina's eyes slowly closed as she fell into my embrace. To be exact, their fusion had been released and her body fell after losing the power of its soul. With Pesina's 'corpse' in my arms, I looked around. There, I saw an elemental. Not an elemental who looked like a boy or looked like an elf, but a beautiful elemental who wore a dress weaved with the wind.

I finally understood. The reason that Sharana, no, Pesina was in the form of a boy was to prevent Sharana from coming out. Now that she was freed from Pesina, Sharana had regained her appearance.

She looked like a lively girl in her teens, whose long green hair was split into two-side-up tails[1. Two-side-up is a twintail-like hairstyle, but slightly different. In two-side-up, the back hair isn't fully tied up like in a twintail. Look up “anime two-side-up” hair.].

[I'm Sharana. Thank you for catching Pesina.]

“I'm Kang Shin, nice to meet you. Also... it's only obvious that I show your past contractor respect.”

First, I put Pesina into my inventory. I didn't know if I was going to bury her or cremate her, but leaving her body out in the open

here would only damage it further. Sharana flew toward me and spoke.

[To commemorate Pesina's departure, I want to cry all night and sleep in Master's embrace. Can I do that after we sweep this place?]

“Y-Yeah.”

[Then let's first finish our contract, Master!]

With that, Sharan flew toward me and kissed me on the lips. She was swift, as expected of a wind elemental. Feeling the scent of a cool breeze on my lips, I opened my eyes, while Peika screamed.

[Ugyaaaaaak!]

At that moment, a fanfare rang out in my ear. I felt like I hadn't heard it in a long time.

[You formed a contract with the wind elemental Sharana! Your affinity to the wind element increases greatly!]

[List of Contracted Elementals

1. Peika – Lightning elemental. Unique elemental. Materialized. First seal released. Second Awakening.

2. Ruyue – Ice elemental. Unique elemental. Materialized. Unsealed. Second Awakening.]

3. Sharana – Wind Elemental. Unique elemental. Materialized. Unsealed. Second Awakening.]

Feeling the new power flowing through my body, I knew the contract between me and SHarana was made. At the same time, Sharana took my mana and began to materialize. She became taller and more mature. Her hair always became longer and fluttered in the air as the wind blew around her.

Right, this was the normal unsealing. Ruyue and Peika were truly unique in this regard as they changed their form. Ruyue became a girl from a wolf and Peika became a dragon from a girl.

[Wow, the seal was released right after we formed our contract! We must really be a perfect match, Master!]

Sharana looked at her body with widened eyes, then hugged me excitedly. Mm, why did elementals' intimacy go through the roof as soon as they formed contracts? Strange, I didn't remember pulling the same card more than once.[2. I don't know what this is referencing. Perhaps some card game where you can "evolve" or "strengthen" the same card?]

As Peika was glaring at Sharana like she wanted to eat her, I pushed Sharana away slightly and answered.

"My affinity to wind was practically at the peak already."

It had been strengthened by many things, so it made sense that Sharana's seal was undone the moment we formed our contract. In any case, with Sharana no longer being a mad elemental, I was done with my job. I turned around to see how others were doing.

[He was defeated!?!]

“Ah, an opening!”

“It's so hard and cold!”

“If you're done, hurry up and help us!”

[Ice Souls! Catch them!]

“Ludia, block them!”

“I told you, don't call me Ludia! O Mitarus, embrace this evil soul with your love!”

[Ice Witch, take this!]

“Mommy!”

“Scarlet Flame

The close-ranged attackers were all fighting the giant armor while dodging its hammer smashes. The long-ranged attackers were destroying the army of armor minions that the giant armor was endlessly creating, while also attacking the giant armor. It was a total pandemonium.

“Haaaaap! Heaven Collapsing Strike!”

[Hmph!]

The spear father thrust out clashed with the giant armor’s hammer. A boom rang out. Meanwhile, Laz Michel charged toward the giant armor and struck down on its foot with his bastard sword.

“Haa!”

[Kyaaaa!]

“Huu, now!”

“Hit and run, Shadow!”

“I know, Ajusshi!”

[You can try to hurt me, but it’s useless!]

“Mommy!”

“I’m coming!”

A giant scarlet flame rose up above the giant armor. Focused on the area carved away by the others, the scarlet flames were slowly but surely devouring its body. The giant armor roared and summoned more minions, which were promptly melted by a wave of Ina’s hand. Hwaya’s flames and Ina’s ice were dominating the battle.

“Peika, let’s go in straight.”

[Leave it to me, Master!]

I formed chaos flames again and asked Sharana.

“Sharana, what are you most confident in?”

[Master, I can make everything stronger. Colder ice, faster lightning, hotter lightning!]

“Good. I’m sorry to ask you when you just materialized, but can you help us?”

[Gladly!]

Sharana's body seemed to scatter into thin air. In the next moment, the chaos flames began to rage as if to break through the ceiling. The chaos flames' power had almost doubled in an instant! Its powerful energy made everyone focus their attention toward me.

[Elemental, so you choose to side with humans! Even though the Lord gave you a chance!]

[Demon-ssi, I hate demons more than I hate humans! Let's go, Master!]

I imbued all my mana into my spear. The giant armor sent armor minions after me, but they were easily blocked by Peika. While it was focused on me, my companions attacked violently.

“Peika!”

[Un!]

If I was the only one here, I would have attacked with Crimson Roar, but that skill attacked everyone, whether foe or ally. As such, the next strongest attack was to use chaos flames!

[I'll melt your fat armor!]

[Like I'd bow to a mere elemental!]

While Peika and I were charging toward him together, Peika opened her mouth widely and accelerated. She dodged the hammer it swung and bit down on its neck, immediately releasing a vast amount of lightning. For an instant, the spacious hall became dyed in gold.

[Kuaaaaaaaaaa!]

“Attack now!”

With the opening created by Peika, the attackers each left a grave injury on its body. Father used his shockwaves to break the ice forming its body, Ye-Eun and the others left cracks on its body with quick successive attacks, and Laz Michel widened the cracks with his unexpectedly delicate control over his sword.

[Freeze!]

Even with Peika’s full-force attack, it was daunted in the least. Its eyes flashed and the air instantly became colder. However, we had our way of dealing with it.

“That won’t work on us!”

Along with Hwaya’s sharp shout, the air began to heat up. The ice that tried to form were quickly sublimated to vapor, as foggy steam filled up the hall. At the heated air, the giant armor roared.

[Kuaaaaaaaaa!]

It was then that I decided to make my move. Amidst the dense water vapor in the air, I charged toward the giant armor. It seemed it could clearly see me even in this fog, as it flashed its eyes and shot its crumbling fist toward me.

[I can see you, cowardly human!]

“I thought you’d say that, so I prepared this specifically for you. Shadow Blink!”

In the next moment, I was behind it. Using Divine Speed, I gained more time and focused the chaos aura and heroic aura to the tip of my spear. Then, I thrust forward!

[Critical Hit!]

My spear easily pierced through the giant armor’s neck, which had been weakened by Ina and Hwaya’s joint attack. A huge flame erupted. Strengthened by Sharana’s power, the inextinguishable flame ignored its resistance and blazed, eventually separating its neck from its body. It let out a death throe.

[Kuaaaak! Y-You cowardly human!]

“Life’s about the result, Fool.”

As I swung my spear and shook off the chaos flame, I murmured to myself like a cold city man. I was pretty cool if I said so myself.

Immediately afterward, a fanfare rang out for all of us.

[You defeated the Event Dungeon's boss monster, 'High-rank Demon Protesla!']

[4,000,000 gold will be distributed evenly among party members. You obtained 500,000 gold.]

As the other party members were watching, I made a cool pose on top of the crumbling Protesla's body. I knew what they wanted to say. It was probably why I was acting so cool or that my flame was a cheat. But since I didn't get the first place in contribution, it should be fine!

I shouted inwardly and said to the others.

“Alright, let's go home!”

Our short, yet long, expedition had finally come to an end.

Author's note:

You must have a question after reading this chapter. Put it aside,

as it will be revealed in the next arc.

This arc has come to an end! We'll finish off the matter with Earth early next chapter and go back to the dungeon! Plus, since I promised to end the arc by this chapter, it's 200% the normal length! Hu, I've gotten used to it by now... haha... ha...

Chapter 165. Double Crisis (1)

When we came out of the dungeon, the Guardians' cheer was truly breaking through the heaven. This time, I felt like it was a true welcome. Russia's prime minister also ran over as soon as he heard that the dungeon disappeared.

Of course, as soon as he saw Ina in Hwaya's arms, he froze. Seeing him shaking, I winked and spoke.

“In exchange for taking care of Russia's SS ranked gate, Revival requests Russia to officially accept Illina Alexandrovna Mikhalova's citizenship renunciation. She has already asked to be naturalized to Korea.”

There was only one acceptable answer. I put so much effort into memorizing Illina's name that I would have smacked him if he didn't accept my request.

We then split ways with Michel on a good note. Although Sharana wasn't at fault, she materialized and apologized sincerely. Before he got on his flight to France, he told me, “It was a truly astonishing experience. A giant armor that can talk, an elemental, and a different world... You know more about it, right?”

“Yes, I do. In the coming days, I suspect that I will have to tell you about it and seek your help.”

“I've seen with my own eyes why your organization exists, so I won't doubt you. I hope the day comes soon. It seems it's much

more serious than anyone could anticipate.”

“Thank you for your thoughts.”

After saying our goodbye to Michel, we went back home immediately. Sumire returned to Japan, Shuna went back to the guild house, Ye-Eun went back to her home (though she kept turning around and looking at me), and Walker went back to his new house, which was right next to ours.

Then, a problem arose.

“Daddy, don’t you live with Mommy?”

“Uh, mm...”

Right, we weren’t sure what to do with Ina.

At first, I thought it would be easy since Hwaya said she’d take care of her.

“I’ll take her. My place is pretty big for just me and my mom. I think Mom would like Ina, too.”

“Will you be okay? Isn’t your mother an ordinary person?”

“M-Mother... Kuhum. O-Of course, I promised Ina, too.”

“That’s... true.”

This was the promise.

First, I would appoint Ina to become a First Dungeon explorer. This had already been done. She was now a First Dungeon explorer.

Second, Ina would quickly climb the dungeon and reach the 21st floor, when she would be able to enter the Residential Area.

Third, we’d invite her to the guild house. She’d stay with Mommy (Hwaya) or Daddy (me) when she was on Earth, and stay in the dungeon or the guild house when we were both away.

The third clause was especially important. Without Hwaya or me, Ina would be treated as a dangerous ability user again. To help her live as a regular child, the third clause was necessary. Though she couldn’t really live as a regular child from the moment she was made a dungeon explorer.

“Plus, even if anything happens, I can quickly come back, so it’s okay. With my power, I can save people as long as not much time has passed.”

Hwaya spoke with a reddened face and hugged Ina again. Then, Ina tilted her head and reached out and grabbed my sleeve. As I wasn’t wearing my armor, it was my actual sleeve.

“What about Daddy?”

“.... Hm?”

“Daddy’s coming too, right?”

We became speechless for a moment. I wasn’t sure how to explain this to her. However, Ina skillfully read the awkward air between Hwaya and me and asked.

“Are you having a divorce?”

“We never married in the first place, Ina!”

As much as Ina was hungry for affection, she was indulging herself and having us spoil her. Because of it, she felt younger than her actual age, but she wasn’t a girl that couldn’t understand reason. She should know that Hwaya and I aren’t really husband and wife, nor that we were dating.

Even so, I explained to Ina again to drive the point home. Ina then puffed her cheeks and said, “But the two of you are a match made in heaven.”

“Where did you learn that phrase?”

“Mommy taught—”

When Ina was about to reply, Hwaya blocked her mouth naturally and pulled her into her embrace.

“Ina, Mommy told you about the guild house, right? You can see Daddy there.”

“You don’t live together?”

“Ina, you can’t be stubborn about this.”

“... Okay.”

Ina helplessly nodded. Then, she gave me a peck on the cheek and made me promise.

“You have to come see me every day!”

“Mm, I’ll try, Ina. Every day might be hard though.”

Beyond wasn’t a place I could clear so quickly. Even when I explained that to her, Ina sulked. Kids really were difficult.

Before we all returned to our daily lives, I called the guild members together. We then held a funeral for Pesina in the guild’s resort, Resting Place of the Angels. The funeral was a special ceremony for elementalists, and Sharana watched in her materialized form.

It was something only possible when a fellow elementalist was present. In this funeral, elementals would gather in the corpse of the elementalist and they would sublimate the mana left in the corpse. The body would then naturally dissipate. The myth was that an elementalist that went through this funeral would reincarnate as an elemental.

As it used up a lot of the helping elemental's mana, it wasn't viable during battle. It was rare for there to even be an elementalist to help. In addition, most elementalists hated to this funeral ceremony to be seen by others. Thus, it was a rare sight.

That said, the elemental funeral ceremony was probably one of the most beautiful forms of funerals for humans.

“Elementals, light up the path forward for your friend.”

[An elf elemental!]

[Poor girl, she couldn't die all this time.]

[Prince said to help.]

[This is my first time doing this!]

Countless colorful elementals gathered in Pesina's corpse. In the process of naturally taking out her mana, the elementals shone

with a light that even those who couldn't see elementals could see. It was almost as if a rainbow was being drawn above Pesina's corpse.

“Beautiful...!”

“My.”

“Hm.”

“Unbelievable, to think Kang Shin could show such a beautiful sight.”

Except for Walker, the rest of Revival's members watched silently. It would have been nice if we could have held funerals for the rankers that died in the Event Dungeon, but their corpses became lost when the Event Dungeon disappeared.

As time passed, the light became stronger. Eventually, the light began to diminish around a focal point. By the time the elementals stopped giving off light, Pesina's corpse became particles of light and scattered into the air. All mana left in her body had been used up.

[Goodbye, Pesina. It was really fun being with you.]

Sharana spoke with a cheerful voice and created a breeze to send the particles away. I couldn't help but ask Sharana.

“Will Pesina be reborn as an elemental?”

[Yes. Since we even held an elemental funeral ceremony, I’m sure of it. I’d like to meet her again one day...]

She murmured in a whisper, then bowed.

[Thank you, Master. I didn’t think you even knew about the elemental funeral ceremony.]

“It comes with being an elementalist. Though, I don’t really know how I know.”

I smiled bitterly and turned to look at the party members, who were still standing around with blank expressions.

“Thank you for coming over, everyone. Let’s enjoy a good tuna sashimi at the mansion and go back to exploring the dungeon!”

I wanted to finish it soon. The melting tuna... no matter how much I ate, it wouldn’t disappear! Hwaya and I were eating it whenever we could, but there was no end in sight. Perhaps I had to give some of it away to Fairy Garden.

While everyone began to move, there was one person that continued to stand still. It was Ludia. When I approached her, she stood in place and asked.

“Shin, what did you say was the name of the elf elementalist?”

“I told you, it’s Pesina. Why?”

I tilted my head and put my hand on her shoulder. She flinched as if she was slightly surprised, then became pale and asked.

“Shin, Pesina is the name of the legendary elf Hero who fought against the Demon Race in Luka continent 50 years ago...”

I immediately ran to Loretta. Because I told her I would be away for a while, she had temporarily gone back to Fairy Garden. Thus, I had to run to Fairy Garden to meet her.

“Loretta!”

When I opened the door to the log cabin, I saw Loretta and Lin drinking tea, and also a beautiful woman sitting right next to Lin. When Loretta saw me, she threw the teacup she was holding (the woman on the opposite side of her caught it with magic), and jumped toward me.

“Kyak, Shin-nim! I wanted to see you so mu... I, I mean! You took too long, stupid!”

“I wanted to see Loretta a lot too, but there’s something more important right now.”

“You treated it like an unimportant matter again! Treating my feelings like tha... Wait, you said you wanted to see me a lot? Ehehe...”

Loretta’s expression quickly changed from a look of injustice to a blooming smile. Though it looked stupid, it was also quite cute. However, I didn’t have the time right now.

“Wow... So this is Loretta’s boyfriend?”

“Well, yeah. He’s a bit of an idiot, but he strangely attracts women. You be careful, too.”

“So he’s like you, Lin.”

“You dare to make fun of a draconian? How bold. Good, follow me, I’ll show you my rage.”

I could hear Lin and the woman’s chatter, but I ignored them and pulled off Loretta, who was rubbing her face on my chest as if to poke a hole through it.

“Loretta, you know I left to destroy Event Dungeons, right?”

“Yes, Shin-nim told me about it. You became so strong, but you shouldn’t trust your status too much. What’s important is your level. No matter how overwhelming your stats are compared to an

enemy, if your level is too low, the league of your soul will fundamentally pale in comparison.”

“You can tell me about that later in more detail. There’s something I wanted to ask Loretta about that.”

“What is it, Shin-nim?”

It seemed she realized that I was being serious. Loretta’s eyes had also become serious. I calmly explained to her what happened. Meeting the elf elementalist Pesina and my new partner Sharana in the dungeon, and that they were both from the Luka continent.

“Is the Demon Army that attacked Luka continent also attacking Earth? Loretta, how can that be possible? The Demon Army only just conquered the Luka continent. How could they have been invading Earth since 2 years ago? Did they operate 2 separate armies? Or is there a warp in time that I’m not aware of?”

“N-No, neither of them are true.”

Loretta shook her head. Her lips were trembling.

“Oh, please, I can’t...”

“Loretta.”

“They aren’t Earth’s enemy. I’m sure of this because only worlds

that have lost their power can invade other worlds...”

“ ... ”

I heard an absurd secret. Wait, did that mean that the world’s enemy was also residents of other worlds like us? Were they invading other worlds to steal their power? How did they lose their power in the first place!?

No, I could solve that mystery later. The important thing now was...!

“Then why did an Earth’s dungeon have a boss who served the Demon Lord?”

“Isn’t it obvious, kid? They can’t pave a pathway themselves, but they can use the pathway that’s already been drilled.”

Lin responded in place of Loretta, who was lost for words. His eyes flashed with coldness.

“Your world is currently being attacked by two forces. Although it’s rare, it’s not like it hasn’t happened before. Ones that got a taste of the world’s power could easily turn their attention to other worlds’ powers. Even after they achieved the continual existence of their world, they aren’t satisfied and seek to obtain even greater powers. That’s who you’re dealing with.”

He continued with a slightly trembling voice.

“We call that a Double Crisis. Simply put, you’re fucked.”

Author’s note:

I googled Double Crisis just in case and I got Pokemon... WHY!?

Hello, this is Toika. The secret behind the world is being slowly revealed. A new administrative guild master has been revealed, though she hasn’t been introduced yet! ICDS’s setting is starting to be revealed!

Double Crisis will be explained more in detail next chapter! Then, after that will be more dungeon conquering. Next chapter is pretty important so pay attention!

Chapter 166. Double Crisis (2)

“Originally, the invasion process is extremely slow. After all, there’s a limit to the number of times that the pathway can be used before it can be used again. But once a Double Crisis occurs, the dimensional pathway widens and the invasion speed accelerates. The world that faces a Double Crisis then faces more enemies more quickly.”

Loretta’s explanation validated Lin’s words. Just like he said, Earth looked pretty fucked.

“Shin-nim, tell me. How many Event Dungeons appeared this time?”

“About 300.”

“300... 300... The invasion of Earth began 1 year and 8 months ago, and it was about two and a half months ago that the Demon Army from the conquered Luka continent began to reach out to another world...”

The woman who was talking to Lin responded instead of Loretta.

“It looks like one of the forces invading will completely arrive in 2 years at least... Isn’t your world over?”

“Shut it, Eleine.”

Loretta said with a smile. The woman, Eleine, flinched. With that, their relative positions were made clear.

“It’s fine. If it’s Shin-nim, he might be able to do it... He’s completely rewriting the dungeon’s history. If he can climb to the end of the dungeon within 2 years...”

“Ha? You think he can conquer the First Dungeon, which has never been conquered, in just 2 years? What floor is he in? 98th?”

“54th.”

“Pfft.”

“And he’s an explorer of Beyond.”

“...”

The woman called Eleine had a dumbfounded expression.

“Loretta, are you saying that for real? Or have you finally lost your mind? Fine, as an explorer of Beyond at just the 54th floor, it is true that he is a genius. I’ll admit that. Even so, it’s impossible. It’s physically impossible. He can perhaps barely achieve it if he’s given 200 years.”

“Just 1 year and 8 months ago, Shin-nim was on the 5th floor.”

“...?”

Oh, I knew that expression. That was the expression Ye-Eun had when I first told her about the dungeon. It was the, ‘What the hell is this person saying?’ kind of expression. However, Loretta gestured at her, as if it was a waste of time to explain things to her.

“Eleine, sorry, but leave. I don’t want non-guild members to hear what I have to say from now.”

“You should know this, but Loretta...”

“Leave.”

With that, Loretta gestured strongly with her hands. Eleine’s words were interrupted and she faded away. With a harrumph, Loretta snorted and explained.

“That woman’s is the guild master of the administrative guild, ‘Lost Valley.’ Ever since she fell for Lin, she would ignore her status as a guild master and visit Fairy Garden. You don’t need to pay attention to a fool like her.”

I had the feeling I knew a similar woman, but I didn’t say it aloud. Loretta then began to drink her tea again. Meanwhile, I asked Lin to fix my equipment. As I hadn’t done any equipment maintenance for one month, they were quite bruised. Lin scowled, but still accepted my armor and began to work on it.

Loretta, who was drinking tea, suddenly grit her teeth after seeing my armor.

“Lin, Shin-nim’s equipment is old. For how long are you going to let him wear such lousy equipment?”

“Noonim, it hasn’t been that long since I made them for him. Plus, they’re Epic-grade items...”

“Don’t make me say it twice.”

“Tsk... Understood. I’ll make him better ones.”

I had felt it before, but perhaps Loretta was quite a tyrant to those working for her. While I was thinking about their subordinate-superior relationship, Lin glared at me and spoke.

“But I won’t do it for free. Bring me some reasonable material, something that would make me hit my knees and yell, ‘That’s it!’”

“What would Lin be impressed by? Flame Drake?”

“Please. Where would I use that lizard? If you want to impress me with the type of creature, bring me a dragon or a peak-rank demon.”

Lin snorted and answered. He made me remember something. I took out the corpse of the Demon Army Commander Shatuno,

which I had just stuffed into my inventory.

“How about this, Lin?”

The moment Lin saw Shatuno’s corpse, he bit his lips and clenched his fists. Then, he muttered like he hated it.

“Damn, this is it...!”

“Why aren’t you hitting your knees? Go on, I’ll be watching. Do it.”

“Agh, how annoying!”

Besides Shatuno’s corpse, Lin took parts of the Evil Rhinoceros Beetle’s carapace, the Cyclops Lord’s skin and blood, and other monsters which were stuffed in my inventory. Then, he took Red Dragon Felixes’ Cape, which was originally attached to the armor set.

“I’ll refine the cape by adding the demon’s skin. It looks like I’ll be busy...”

“Great! It looks like you found yourself a job to do, Lin!”

“I already have a lot! Do you want to kill me, noonim!?”

“Ei, how could my Lin die from something like that? So hurry up~”

Loretta pressured Lin with a bright smile. Lin scratched his head and let out a deep sigh before he got up.

“Damn it... Then I’m going to go work on these. Oi, Kang Shin. It’s going to take me a while, so live without a cape for a bit.”

“Thank you, Lin.”

“Hmph!”

He gave me a snort and left the cabin. Seeing his back, Loretta snickered.

“Lin must really like Shin-nim.”

“Which part of that conversation gave you that idea!?”

“Don’t you know? No matter how much I plead, Lin never makes equipment for someone he hates.”

I thought what Loretta did was more like threatening with authority than pleading, but I must have misunderstood. I was certain. It definitely wasn’t because I was afraid of her Last Bullet of Extermination.

“Then, Shin-nim, let’s go back to talking about the matter at hand.”

Loretta put down her teacup, placed her hands on her knees, and looked at me intently. Her mystical eyes that occasionally flashed with light seemed to be examining me with worry.

“Um, don’t worry too much about what Eleine said. It’s not over yet.”

“Ah.”

I remembered what we just talked about. However, the fact that 20 years had turned into 2 years didn’t really strike me as real.

2 years? I had to face someone like that Demon Lord in 2 years? Compared to the Luka continent’s countless number of warriors, Earth was too ill-prepared. The ability users were not finished growing yet and there were only a few dungeon explorers. We could only now begin to look for trustworthy allies, but to think we only had 2 years left...

Not to mention, the one behind this crisis was none other than the Demon Lord who attacked the Luka continent... I asked the suspicion I had since a while ago.

“Loretta...”

“No, it’s a coincidence.”

Loretta interrupted me.

“It’s not because Shin-nim went as a Dimensional Mercenary. If that was enough to cause a Double Crisis, no one would want to be a Dimensional Mercenary.”

“But I’m Earth’s Hero. Could that have affected—”

“No. Shin-nim, I can promise you. That’s not it. Do you not trust me?”

Loretta brought her face up to mine. Her golden eyes were shining like two bright gems. She was close enough for me to feel her breath. Seeing Loretta’s resolute eyes, I shook my head.

“I trust you.”

“The Demon Lord probably doesn’t know about Shin-nim’s existence. He will only realize once he crosses over. He simply invaded another world through a pathway, which happened to lead to Earth. Please, trust me, Shin-nim.”

“Like I said, I trust you.”

“Un... Good.”

Loretta moved back with a satisfied expression. Then, she

suddenly clapped.

“Alright, then think about what you should do now!”

“What should I do?”

“You should finish climbing the dungeon in 2 years!”

She said it as if it was simple.

“If possible, your allies, too.”

“That sounds extremely difficult.”

“But Shin-nim is the only one qualified to enter Beyond, right? If it’s just the First Dungeon, Shin-nim’s friends might be able to succeed with a monopoly over the blessings.”

“I’d like it if that were the case.”

“If that happens, you have a great chance to succeed. I can guarantee it.”

“You want us to do in just 2 years what other explorers couldn’t in hundreds of years?”

“Otherwise, Shin-nim’s world will come to an end.”

“ ... ”

When I became silent, Loretta also became silent. This time, the silence continued for a long time. When I couldn't handle the atmosphere anymore and was about to get up, Loretta opened her mouth.

“Shin-nim.”

“Yes?”

“If... If Shin-nim is scared... I...”

“... Loretta?”

“Even if you abandon your world, I won't blame you.”

I doubted my ears.

“Loretta.”

“It would go against the dungeon and the Lord's philosophy... but Shin-nim is more important to me. I, I won't blame you, so if... if the burden gets too heavy... if Shin-nim can't bear it anymore...”

I cut her off and asked.

“What happens if I run away?”

“... If a Hero stays in the dungeon for too long, it will be the same as his world losing its power.”

“In other words, the same thing that happened to the Luka continent will happen to Earth.”

“...”

Her silence was the strongest affirmation. Seeing her reaction, I felt alleviated.

Running away... It wasn't that I hadn't considered it. But if I did, what about my parents? Even if I made mother and Yua into dungeon explorers and brought them to the dungeon, what about my friends? Would they think the same way as me? If they didn't, would I be able to leave them behind and abandon Earth?

No, of course not. I didn't plan to in the first place. Why did I have to abandon my friends and escape to the dungeon? Because of the Demon Lord? Because of the other unknown enemy? I should stay put in the dungeon because I was afraid of them? If I threw away what was important to me and survived, would the life I have be worth living?

I was certain that the answer was no. I hated losing my freedom the most. No one could tie me down. I hated the people trying to

restrain me because I was a Hero, but what I hated the most was throwing away my freedom because i was afraid of monsters.

I grinned.

“You already know my answer, right?”

“But Shin-nim...”

“I decided. 2 years, right? Are you sure about that?”

“Y-Yes. It’s 2 years at the earliest. But—”

“I’ll do it within 2 years then.”

I said lightly and smiled. Then, I wiped Loretta’s eyes, which were beginning to tear up.

“Short and simple. If I can conquer the dungeon in 2 years, I can destroy whatever comes my way, be it the Demon Lord or anything else.”

“B-But it doesn’t have to be Shin-nim that does—”

“But there’s only me.”

“...”

“I’ll do it. I know I can. So don’t worry and just watch over me. I’ll break through the dungeon and save the world. I’ll be the coolest guy in the world.”

“Shin-niiim...”

Loretta was still frowning. So, I continued.

“For Loretta, I’ll make sure I succeed.”

“For... me...?”

“Loretta, I’m going to be different. Trust me.”

“Shin-nim.”

Loretta widened her eyes. With her already big eyes, she looked slightly scary.

“How did you...”

“It’s easy to see.”

“N-No, Shi, Shin-nim, I, Shin-nim is the only, ah, uuk, did you perhaps meet, ahuk!”

Loretta ended up biting her tongue. I couldn't help but laugh seeing her clumsiness.

“I already know. Don't worry about something like that and wait. The First Dungeon's 54th floor and Beyonds' 4th floor. I'll first clear them and come back.”

“Shin-nim.”

I patted her head and continued.

“You don't trust me?”

“... I trust you. I trust in Shin-nim's potential. So... let me keep supporting you.”

“Of course. Then, I'll be off.”

I smiled and left the cabin. I heard Loretta's sniffing, but I didn't turn around.

Now, it was the time to conquer the dungeon! Just you wait, 100th floor!

... By the way, I didn't propose to Loretta, did I!?

Author's note:

You waited long, everyone. This chapter was of Loretta, for Loretta, and with Loretta! This is what everyone wanted, right!?

Shin's heart has been slightly revealed as well. If the others don't try harder, the fight for the heroine position might just end! We need those popularity contest votes!

From the next chapter, we'll go full-speed to the upper levels of the dungeon. There will be Event Raids, other administrative guilds, other strong/famous guilds, etc. along the way, but those aren't important!

Chapter 167. Double Crisis (3)

Because it's been so long since I entered the dungeon, I've almost forgotten what monsters appeared in the 50th floor range. Regardless, I met the giant humanoid monsters of the 54th floor head on and broke through in just one hour.

“... Eh?”

This was the first time I had broken through a dungeon floor in one hour. When I reached the Floor Shop and saw that Loretta wasn't back, I realized just how quickly I had broken through the 54th floor. Flustered, I looked back.

[Huhu, this is my power, Master!]

“Yeah, Peika is really amazing.”

[It's a good thing my seal was released!]

It seemed like the biggest reason was that I charged through the floor by riding on a materialized Peika. When I materialized Peika, I didn't have the spare power to summon Ruyue or Sharana. I simply drank Mana Potions whenever they were off cooldown and scorched monsters in our way with chaos flame. It was fine to use Peika's ability from time to time, but I was still lacking in mana to ride her and rush forward for dozens of minutes.

This method would not work in Beyond. Just five stacks of Orc

Lords' Warcries would turn our quick charge into a shortcut to death.

"Regardless, I need to clear the First Dungeon as quickly as possible. After all, Beyond inadvertently takes up more time."

I first dematerialized Peika and circulated Peruta Circuit to restore mana and relieve fatigue. Now, climbing the First Dungeon wasn't so difficult. If it was, I would be troubled. I only had 2 years left. The less time I spent in the First Dungeon, the better. I needed to focus my time on conquering Beyond.

"Alright, let's go once I'm fully revitalized! My goal is to break through in 4 days!"

[Master can do it if Master is with me! Master doesn't need the others!]

I smiled at Peika's declaration and patted her head. 'Sorry Peika, but I'm going to need Ruyue and Sharana's power too for Beyond.'

On Beyond's 4th floor, both Orc Lords and Wraith Queens were waiting for me. I already knew how fierce Orc Lords were, but the Wraith Queens' mental attacks couldn't really affect me. Since the only physical attack they could do was shooting ectoplasms arrows, I felt that I could just ignore them. Of course, things didn't go as I expected.

The Orc Lords' warcries affected all allies. In other words, the

Wraith Queens were also strengthened. Their mental attacks weren't strengthened by much, but their ectoplasm arrows were extremely scary. Just a single one of them could break through my armor and shake my soul. If that wasn't enough, they were shooting hundreds of them at once, which bounced around and got strengthened further. It was like I was in hell.

[Human! A human with a shining soul!]

[Kuoooooooo! Eat him!]

[Handsome men are all enemies!]

“You bastards... including personal enmities...! Have a taste of my crossbow bolt!”

My Spear Technique couldn't do much on Beyond 4th floor. Since the Wraith Queens shot hundreds of ectoplasm arrows at me whenever they saw me, I didn't have the chance to run into them and create whirlpools or whatnot. What I relied on was the Epic-grade crossbow, Perfect Hunter.

[Perfect Hunter (Epic)]

Durability – 351/360

Attack – 3,750

Equipment Requirement – Strength, Dexterity, Magic +150.
Mid-rank Crossbow Marksmanship

Option – Strength +15, Dexterity +15, Magic +15. Adds wind

attribute to bolt-based attacks. Attack speed +20%. Automatic reloading. Uses 10 mana to create mana bolts when the user is out of bolts.

Skill – Invisible Shooter: Makes the bolts invisible and removes sound and presence from bolts. Adds 30% bonus to speed and attack power.]

Thankfully, Perfect Hunter already had a wind attribute bonus. When Sharana was infused into it, the wind attribute was strengthened even more, maximizing the speed and piercing power of the bolts. In addition, one couldn't see the bolts Perfect Hunter shot out. As a result, it was hard to dodge them and many only recognized the bolts once they were hit.

[Kuaaaaaaaaang!]

[Cowardly human!]

[Kuaaaaa! Kill that human!]

No matter how much they struggled and tried to kill me, they couldn't catch up to me in speed. The only thing they could do was to use Warcries and shoot out the strengthened ectoplasm arrows. But since ectoplasm arrows exploded upon contact, it was possible to shoot them down. I left Ruyue to this task. The countless ice crystals Ruyue created was perfect for blocking the ectoplasm arrows.

[Elemental! Kill the elemental!]

[Girls prettier than me should all die!]

[Kill all the girls hanging around guys!]

... And the important thing was to purposefully let a few ectoplasm arrows go through.

After I dodged them with acrobatic maneuvers, they would bounce around the walls and kill Wraith Queens or Orc Lords. It was similar to how I was dealing with them before.

[Kyaaaaaak!]

[My soul is being purified...!]

“How are you being purified by your own arrows... You’re going to put exorcists out of business. Haat!”

I busily maneuvered around, dodging their attacks and shooting out bolts. With my stats increased over the last month, I felt much lighter. It was why clearing the 4th floor was quicker than the 2nd floor. If I could control the ectoplasm arrows with Ruyue, the 4th floor was a piece of cake. That said, I couldn’t continue this hit-and-run tactic forever. As I had to continue onward to find the pathway, it was possible that I had reached a dead-end.

[Kuaaaaaang!]

As expected, when I found myself in a dead-end, the Orc Lords shouted and charged at me, as if they were waiting for this moment. The Wraith Queens also shot out a countless number of ectoplasm arrows as they flew toward me. I ordered Ruyue to create a whirlpool of ice and used it to strike away the ectoplasm arrows. Then, I shouted.

“Peika!”

[Thunder Ground!]

A black dragon appeared in the air. A thick bolt of lightning flashed through the crowd of monsters. When the powerful lightning joined the ice crystals, it became stronger and spread out in all directions. The monsters all screamed in unison.

[Kuaaaaaaaaak!]

“Next up..!”

I hung the crossbow on my waist and took out the Chaotic Spear from my back. Because the monsters were super-armored, they continued to run at me even as they screamed in pain. If I didn’t kill them now, I would be trampled to death by them.

“Elemental Tempest!”

Elementals gathered in my spear while chatting noisily. Peruta Circuit spun vehemently and covered my entire body in a whirlpool. I tamed the whirlpool of mana that seemed to want to explode and trapped it at the tip of my spear. As more elementals gathered, the spear shone with more and more brilliant light.

[Die, humaaaaaaaan!]

“Sorry, but I can’t die even once...!”

The moment they arrived in front of me, I released the storm of elementals. Almost as if I shot a cannon, a giant back blast pushed me backward and made me hit the wall behind me. I groaned and checked my surroundings. If any of them were alive, I had to get them before they got me.

However, after the storm passed, the pathway was still. Just like always, the monsters all disappeared without leaving a trace. Although they would respawn soon, there were currently no monsters within my detection range.

“... Good.”

After confirming that no monsters survived, I put my spear away on my back. Then, with a deep sigh, I took out and drank a new Mana Potion. The highest-grade Mana Potion was delicious no matter how many times I drank it!

“Peika, I’ll call you again.”

[But I want to stay with Master.]

“Sorry. It’s okay during battle, but it’s hard to keep three elementals out at all times.”

[Pii.]

“Sorry, sorry.”

I sent Peika back and quickly moved on. When I wasn’t in battle, I infused Sharana into my body instead of the crossbow, so I could maximize my movement speed. If I used more mana, I could even fly. Talaria’s usefulness had somewhat disappeared. Though, if I summoned Talaria, my speed would increase even more!

[It looks like Master is very used to flying. Most elementalists have trouble when they fly for the first time.]

“I have something called Talaria. It lets me fly for a fixed period of time every day. I was using it when I was fighting Pesina, too.”

[Wow! Now that you mention it, you really were flying back then! You really are special, like having three elementals isn’t enough...]

While listening to Sharana and flying through the pathway, I shot a bolt toward the ground. The bolt then bounced around from

the ground to the ceiling multiple times like a bouncy ball, then struck a corner of the wall with a mountain-crumbling force. Immediately afterward, a boom rang out along with a scream.

[Kuaaaaaaa!]

“Good. This zone is taken care of.”

Using Mana Detection, I had detonated a trap I discovered and even killed an Orc Lord that was waiting around the corner. It was truly a satisfying feeling.

[Kiaaaaaaaaaaaaa!]

The Wraith Queens that were outside of the trap’s range came out and began to shoot ectoplasm arrows. However, if they weren’t strengthened by Warcries, I didn’t even need to dodge them.

“Ruyue, shield!”

[Crystal Guard!]

I took out my spear and charged at the crowd of Wraith Queens. At the same time, Ruyue’s ice crystals enveloped me like a cloud. I circulated Peruta Circuit and activated Mad Typhoon. The whirlpool of mana mixed with the ice crystals disintegrated all ectoplasms arrows it touched.

[Kyaaaaaaak!]

[Kill that human!]

“Haaaaaaap! Blade Rush!”

Before I reached them, I activated Blade Rush. Blades then immediately protruded out from my mouth. I bumped into a Wraith Queen, tearing her to shreds. Then, the blades shout out and tore apart the rest of them. Chaos flames swept over those that survived.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kyaaaaak!]

“Huu, how long do I have to listen to your screams?”

I muttered and erased all traces of the Wraith Queens. The moment the monsters disappeared, complete silence once again arrived. I had gotten used to it by now. In Beyond, it suddenly became loud, then suddenly became silent. It was truly a capricious space.

However, even though everything was proceeding smoothly, I couldn't be happy. Two days had passed since I entered Beyond's 4th floor. I was confident that I was advancing quickly, but I still

hadn't seen a straight pathway. Though, I knew I was rushing things compared to my last Beyond explorations.

It seemed Ruyue had seen through my impatience, as she cheered me up.

[Don't worry! Shin is very strong!]

I wasn't sure what being strong had to do with it, but I knew she was trying to console me. I patted Ruyue, who materialized on her own accord and hugged me. Sharana, who was infused in my body, also added.

[Even if Master doesn't hurry, Master is already very fast!]

Her words were much more meaningful than Ruyue's. I made a bitter smile and nodded.

"You're right. If I rush too much and die, it would be a true disaster. Thanks. Let's keep going at this pace."

The two year time limit was extremely stifling. I could no longer climb the dungeon solely based on my desire to improve myself. The fact that I had to save my friends and family continued to push me.

Perhaps, it was acting as a poison. When the spear held up to protect freedom was weighed down by responsibility, it would lose its sharpness and swiftness. That would be truly foolish.

“Alright... Snap out of it and go!”

I slapped my cheeks with spirit and flew up again. I even summoned Talaria. I wanted to push away some of this stifling feeling.

“Let’s go!”

[Un!]

[Yes, Master!]

20 minutes after that, the straight pathway opened, and I broke through the corridor filled with Orc Lords and Wraith Queen using Crimson Roar and Elemental Tempest. I had broken through Beyond’s 4th floor in two days. It was a pleasant surprise.

Damn, I should’ve waited a bit more! I wasted Talaria!

Chapter 168. Double Crisis (4)

After clearing Beyond's 4th floor, I immediately continued to the First Dungeon's 55th floor, as I wanted to make use of the time I had left on Talaria. While I was sweeping my way through the floor, I received a message from a friend for the first time in a while.

[Crown Prince, are you listening?]

“Ah, Ren. It's been a while.”

[You're finally picked up. Did something happen recently?]

It seemed he had messaged me a few times when I was busy clearing Event Dungeons. I must have really been busy if I didn't notice. I spoke with a bitter smile.

“Yeah, I've been busy with things in my world.”

[I see. Well, I'm sure all explorers are busy in one way or another... So, what floor are you on?]

“I'm about to challenge the 55th floor.”

[... 55th floor?]

Ren became flustered.

[Just how busy were you? I'm grinding the 55th floor's elixirs right now.]

“Well, that's one thing, but I entered the dungeon above the First Dungeon.”

[You mean Beyond!?!]

I couldn't hide my surprise that Ren knew about Beyond.

“How did you know, Ren!?”

[My fath... M-My continent's Hero was Beyond's explorer. I see. When we first met and you told me you defeated the Lizard Knight alone, I suspected that this might happen, but to think it really would...]

“Ren...”

Hm? Wait.

“Ren, did you also defeat all bosses alone until now? I didn't think you did.”

[Of course. The reason I took so long breaking through the dungeon before I met Crown Prince was because of it. Fath... The Hero said I had to defeat the dungeons' bosses alone, so I defeated

the Orc Lord and the Wraith Queen alone. It was just that I didn't grind the elixirs they dropped.]

"I see."

Because he was so happy when he defeated the Lizard Knight alone, I always thought that was the first time he defeated a Floor Master alone, but it seemed he was just happy he succeeded without ever dying.

[Did I never tell you about it? Regardless, meeting Crown Prince increased my dungeon clearing speed by dozens of times. I really can't thank you enough.]

Putting aside the fact that he never told me about it until now, just what was Ren? The son of a Hero and master of a strong knight... Could Ren be a crown prince or something in his continent?

Wait, Beyond currently only had three explorers. One was a woman and one was me. Then, could the other man be Ren's father!? I was curious, but I didn't feel comfortable asking Ren about it.

Surprisingly, the dense Ren seemed to have read my mind.

[It's unlike Crown Prince to hesitate. My continent's Hero is dead.]

I felt stifled.

“I... see.”

[There was no time to transfer the position of Hero to me either. Our enemies' evil hands had already reached the upper echelons of our forces and there was nothing we could do.]

The position of Hero was transferrable. Loretta had told me about it too. However, it wasn't something that could be transferred so easily. Both the receiver and the relinquisher had to meet certain conditions and it took a long time. Simply put, once one received the position of Hero, it was extremely difficult to hand it over to someone else.

“Ren, then...”

[I already told you. I'm the only explorer in Panan continent, including the Second, Third, and Fourth Dungeons. Of course, we have no Beyond explorers either.]

“Ren...”

I couldn't believe that he could say what he was saying so nonchalantly. The Hero was dead. There were no warriors who could reclaim the world's power. I could understand why Lebuik had escaped from Panan. In that case... why...

“Why are you staying in that world, Ren?”

Ren became silent for a bit, then spoke. Rather than saying he was choosing his words, it seemed like he was making a vow to himself as he was explaining to me.

[Because... there are still things I need to protect there. That's why, Crown Prince.]

Most likely, I would remember his words for the rest of my life.

His resolute heart, expressing that he would not doubt his decisions and actions, caused me to feel respect for him. Thinking that I would never forget this moment, I said respectfully.

“If there's anything I can help you with, tell me.”

[Thank you, Crown Prince. I'll remember it. Hahaha, Crown Prince couldn't be more reliable.]

After that, we chatted more about trifling matters and ended the conversation. I felt like a new courage had filled my heart. Thinking that Ren and I would develop into a special relationship that was different than the one with currently had, I stopped in front of the 55th Floor Master room.

The 55th Floor Master was an ogre. It was large and muscular, had rust colored skin, and was said to be the strongest of all biped monsters.

Strangely, it had two heads, which was said to double his strength. I was curious how having an extra head doubled one's strength, but I didn't think anyone would answer me.

According to Ren, he successfully overpowered it with his overwhelming strength. Though, he said he died two times before he succeeded. As such, I opened the door feeling tense.

“Fight me!”

[Kyahahahahaha!]

As expected, there was only a giant ogre standing in a spacious wasteland. The moment it saw me, it screamed strangely and charged at me. Every time it stomped on the ground, the ground tremored. Feeling its strength from the ground, I couldn't help but be shocked.

“My god...!”

It was weaker than an Orc Lord with 7 stacks of Warcry! This guy was a total weakling!

[Kyahahahahaha!]

“Peika, materialize!”

[I've been waiting, Master!]

The moment Peika appeared in her dragon form, I jumped on her back and held the Chaotic Spear with both hands. Infused into it was none other than Sharana. With her, the chaos flame attribute wasn't eaten up, as she could amplify it purely.

The chaos flame blazed ominously and rose up in a whirlpool along with the vigor of Mad Typhoon. I took in a breath and squeezed Peika with my legs. It was the signal telling her to charge.

[Uhuhuhu.]

“Peika, don't make weird noises and charge! There's only one reason I materialized you!”

[Short-term fight, right? Okay, I'm going now!]

[Kyahahahaha!]

I didn't know what it found so laughable, but the Twin-headed Ogre continued to laugh as it approached me. As the saying, ‘fools rush in where angels fear to tread,’ went, this was exactly that. Plus, compared to the Orc Lord, it wasn't even that fast!

“Eat this!”

[Kyahaha!]

When Peika shot toward it like an arrow and blasted it with a lightning bolt, it raised its arms and crossed them to block it. Ogre skin was famous for being highly resilient, and this guy was also a Floor Master. I wondered if it would easily block Peika's lightning, but it seemed the unsealed Peika's lightning was completely different than her old lightning. It instantly pierced through the skin's resistance and electrocuted the ogre.

[Kyaaaaak!]

“Now that's what I wanted to hear! Tempest!”

When it let out a bloodcurdling scream and stepped back, I shot the flame whirlpool enveloping my spear forward! It blocked the Tempest I aimed at its left head with its arm, but the chaos flame devoured its entire right arm and began to scorch it.

[Kyaaaahak!]

“Peika!”

[Leave it to me!]

The ogre screamed and swung its arm toward us. Although there was no way we would be hit by it, when its menacing claws cut through the air, they drew glowing traces of black aura, which flew toward Peika and me. Peika then skillfully maneuvered its body and dodged the attacks before she spat out another lightning bolt.

[Kyahahahahak!]

“Not enough!”

I still had most of my mana remaining. I gripped my spear tightly and fiercely circulated Peruta Circuit so that the spinning sound was even audible from the outside. In an instant, another whirlpool of flame shot up around the spear.

[Master, the claw attack is coming again!]

“What, damn it!”

[Kyaaaaaaaaa!]

It seemed to disregard the flame devouring its right arm as it swung its arms violently. With every swing, five aura streams shot toward me. In the end, dozens of aura streams were flying toward me. Peika hurriedly flew up to dodge them, but she soon clicked her tongue.

[Master, the auras are changing direction and following me!]

“Turn around and charge toward him!”

Wasn't it supposed to be strong physically? How? He's just playing with auras! I gritted my teeth and tightened my legs

around Peika's back to fasten myself.

[Ehe, I can die happy now!]

“You can't die, Peika!”

Peika's body shone with a golden light and discharged lightning. Countless bolts of lightning flickered and dealt lightning damage to the ogre, paralyzing it.

[Kuooooooooo!]

“Kuk!”

Even so, it managed to raise its left arm against me! I instantly widened my eyes and controlled Peika to dodge its thick arm. Although it was weaker than the Orc Lord, it was still true that it was stronger than me in terms of pure strength. If I faced its attack with my spear, I couldn't guarantee my shoulder's safety. Thankfully, Mad Typhoon could damage my enemies without ever needing to touch them.

[Kyagagagak!]

When it realized it missed, it turned its left head toward me and swung its arm once more. However, its stance was already ruined. I leapt forward strongly and thrust my spear out in full force. The chaos flame enveloping the spear swept over it as if to devour it whole.

“I’ll burn your arms off!”

After we successfully left chaos flames in its left arm, we brushed past its body. Then, we heard the aura streams it flew out striking its body and exploding. Peika instantly turned around and charged toward it again.

[Master, attack!]

“I’m already on it!”

When I imbued my spear full of aura, Sharana cheered and expanded the chaos flames more strongly. Enveloped by the reddish black whirlpool of flame, the Chaotic Spear looked like a dragon.

However, the Twin-headed Ogre didn’t seem to want to lose so easily. Although its arms were being eroded by the chaos flames and letting out a strange smell, it raised its arms without a care in the world and screamed.

[Twin-headed Ogre used ‘Ogre Power’! Its strength doubles for a period of time!]

“Wow!”

A skill I really wanted popped out! My eye’s sparkled as I pulled

my spear back. With that skill, I could control Gigantic freely!

[Master, that guy got super strong!]

“Can you block him, Peika?”

[... Of course!]

It clasped its hands and struck down on the ground. The ground then sprung up. It was almost as if it used Dullahan's Outburst skill, except with its bare fists. However, the lightning shooting out of Peika's body perfectly struck the earth shards away.

[Master, are we dodging?]

“No, we don't need to waste our time on this guy. Charge!”

Without replying, Peika increased her speed and charged toward the ogre. I also raised my spear high up in the air. Above the whirlpool of chaos flames, white flames began to blaze. The Twin-headed Ogre spread its arms out and ran toward me. It seemed it wanted to capture me, but that definitely wouldn't happen!

“Sorry, but... you're nothing more than a smallfry!”

[Kaooooooooo!]

BOOM!

It smashed its arms against each other. Some of the chaos flames around it even fell off because of it! However, immediately before it did so, Peika dematerialized and dropped me, letting me dodge its arms perfectly. Its attack brushed past my head and could only pick off a few strands of my hair.

Before I landed on the ground, I saw a good target. As expected of a wild ogre, there was something asserting its presence on its uncovered body! Damn, where's the mosaic!? Otherwise...!

“Take this! Egg... Breaker!!”

The flame whirlpool accelerated to the limit with Mad Typhoon, didn't just break, but rather ravaged and ground everything it touched. I dodged the blood, skin, and bone waste flying about everywhere and landed on the ground. Then, I let out a deep sigh.

“Whew. The spear hit an unfortunate area. From now, Teacher Ogre can never have a child... In other words, he cannot ever have a sexual relationship.”

[Kya, Kyaaaaaak!]

I shook my head and held up my spear. The Twin-headed Ogre could no longer make laughing noises.

It was already dead. Both mentally and physically.

Author's note:

Panan continent will come up again soon... ^^

PS – The popularity contest has been pushed back to next Monday! Along with the new chapter for that day, the chapters' comments will be used for popularity contest so pay attention! ^^

PS2 – Background on Ren has been modified a bit. It was said that he defeated the Floor Master alone for the first time on the 20th floor, but that part has been changed. It was a mistake as I hadn't fleshed out the details on Ren back then... You'll forgive me, right?

PS3 – No, Shin... That's a flag you don't want to raise!

Chapter 169. Double Crisis (5)

[You became level 56. You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[You obtained the qualification to challenge Beyond's 5th floor.]

[Amazing! You are the first in First Dungeon's history to succeed in soloing the Twin-headed Ogre on the first try! The dungeon will remember you as a Great Explorer. You obtained 2 skill point as a reward. Remaining skill points: 20]

[You obtained the title, 'Twin-headed Ogre Master.' All stats increase by 2. This effect will apply even if the title is not equipped.]

[You defeated the Twin-headed Ogre alone. You obtained the special reward, 'Twin-headed Ogre's Leather Pants.']

[You obtained 350,000 gold.]

[You received the only reward left hidden by the First Explorer. Congratulations! Your luck stat increases by 1.]

[Secret. Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo]

I was ecstatic that no one had gotten the first achievement for the 55th floor. Not to mention, the reward was a tattoo! I happily chose the reward. Immediately, my arms began to heat up. The Giant Wolf's Tattoo was engraved on my legs, but it seemed the Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo was for my arms. I took off my armor and checked the tattoo. Streaks of red lines were being drawn on my arms.

[You obtained the Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo. Your strength increases by 15%, and once per day, you can add 50% damage to a close-ranged skill.]

“I'm... full of power!”

I tried to look cool and made a pose showing off my muscles. Feeling the strength surging through my body, I nodded in satisfaction. Then, I put my armor back on. What reward did Ren get? Since he didn't get the first reward, could it be a single-headed ogre tattoo?

In any case, I had no longer had any business in the boss room. Peika, who had dematerialized and returned to her small dragon form, coiled around my arm, as I walked out of the room. When Loretta saw me from the Floor Shop, she flapped her ears and welcomed me. Though I'd seen it many times by now, the ways her ears flapped were always amusing. I thought, ‘I'm curious about elves' muscle structure! Could it be that Elf Queen's had different muscle structure?’

“Shin-nim!”

“I’m back.”

“You were really quick. The Twin-headed Ogre shouldn’t have been an easy enemy.”

“Compared to the Orc Lords, he wasn’t anything.”

“Hahaha...”

Loretta smiled wryly, then seemed to remember something as she said, “Shin-nim. Now that I think about it, I forgot to ask you. I’m sorry to make Shin-nim even busier, but I think Shin-nim would like it.”

“I don’t need the lecture.”

“Okay. So, if you could fight Floor Masters more than three times per day, would you?”

“Of course!”

I nodded my head vigorously and pushed my face toward hers. Then, feeling embarrassed, I pulled back, but Loretta looked completely unaffected as she took something out of her pocket. It was a stack of glowing golden paper!

“Fighting a Floor Master three times every day, but never get tired! The Floor Shop has specially prepared an item just for you! Ten times! Ten times per day! This entrance ticket for high-ranking explorers is incomparable to the average entrance ticket. It is called, ‘Ten Times a Day, You Monster...!’ Now, each ticket is only 100,000 gold! Don’t miss this chance!”

“I’ll buy it, so change the name immediately! Change it!”

Make it a simple combination of adjective and noun! Who’s the one that named it! Bring that person to me now!

The entrance ticket’s name was quite disturbing, but since it was exactly what I needed, I bought it anyway. Using all the money I had, I bought 400 tickets. Since I got 350,000 gold per raid, each of them would be a 250,000 net gold profit.

If I used all this money on Earth instead of the dungeon, the market would undoubtedly crash. It still felt unrealistic that the gold from the dungeon could be exchanged for Earth’s currency.

“You really bought it. I knew my eyes weren’t wrong! So many ‘Ten Times a Day, You Monster...!’s.”

“Change the name!”

“You don’t like it? Eleine said it was her best work...”

“Alright, let me go beat her up now.”

“Ah, Eleine should be hard for Shin-nim right now, so wait until Shin-nim’s level 90! No, since Shin-nim is in Beyond, level 80 might be enough!”

“Thanks for the advice, Loretta...”

That Eleine woman looked frail. To think she would be that strong... Since Loretta chased her away with a single wave of her hand, just how strong was Loretta? As if to stop my train of thought, Loretta stared at my face fixedly.

“Will you be okay? Fighting the Floor Master ten times a day isn’t something to scoff at. I shouldn’t say this as the seller, but you’ll become exhausted...”

“The more time I save on the First Dungeon, the more time I can invest into Beyond. So, of course, I should do it. Isn’t that why you brought them to me, Loretta?”

“That’s true... but...”

Loretta’s ears drooped slightly. I smiled and patted her head.

“Thanks anyway. You can’t sell this to just anyone, right?”

“I, I’m the one who asked Shin-nim to do such a difficult task, so it’s only right that I support Shin-nim to the best of my ability...”

Hehe.”

“Then, I’m off.”

“Eh? Are you leaving? W-Where? Aren’t you fighting the Floor Master again?”

“N-No, there’s someone I need to meet...”

“... A girl?”

Loretta’s soft and flowery eyes quickly turned into the sharp cold eyes of a solitary assassin. It was seriously scary.

“S-She’s technically a girl.”

“Oh? Meeting a girl instead of fighting Floor Masters. I’m quite curious as to who it could be, huhu.”

“Loretta, can you put the battle axe back in the Floor Shop and calm down? She’s only nine years old.”

“9!? N-No, I’m almost 300 times... K-Kuhum!”

I erased what I just heard from my head and chanted the sentence, ‘Loretta’s 17 years old,’ when Loretta asked with teary eyes.

“Does Shin-nim like younger girls? That’s cheap. I can’t do anything about that!”

“I’m like a father to her. It’s not what Loretta’s thinking about, so don’t worry.”

“... Father?”

“Yes.”

Loretta made a radiant smile and took out two giant battle axes from the back of the Floor Shop. Carrying a weapon on each hand! This woman, she’s serious!

“Huhu, to deliver another hook punch right after the first. Shin-nim is really amazing. Now, if you obediently tell me who the mother is, you’ll only see a single person’s blood.”

“You mean you’re going to kill her, right!? You’re killing that person, right!?”

In the end, I didn’t say Hwaya’s name. I knew Loretta wouldn’t really hurt her, but I was worried that Hwaya would be in trouble when she crossed over to the First Dungeon and met Loretta. Although I wanted to trust Loretta, she was clearly not thinking straight with those two axes of hers. I dodged her charging toward me and hurriedly escaped to Marianne’s Garden.

“Daddy!”

“Yeah, ina.”

As I had already told Hwaya and Ina that I would be back soon, the moment I arrived, I was greeted by Ina’s headbutt. She smiled happily and rubbed her face on my cheek. For the record, Ina could use her mana to move extremely quickly. Though, she couldn’t teleport like when she was in Ice Castle. She was similar to Hwaya in many ways.

No matter how outstanding her ability was, if she continued moving like that and hunting monsters, she would run out of mana. Fortunately, HP and MP were completely restored when a floor was cleared. As such, Ina was already on the 22nd floor on just her second day. We may have created an unbelievable monster.

I originally planned to come as soon as I finished Beyond’s 4th floor, but I ended up taking three more hours because I didn’t want to waste Talaria. I made a wry smile at the slight sense of guilt, as I patted Ina’s back.

“How are you so fast, Shin? Didn’t you say it could take over a week?”

Hwaya appeared behind Ina and asked. Since she was still wearing her battle dress, it seemed she had just come back from the dungeon.

“There’s... a reason that I have to hurry a bit more.”

“A reason to hurry?”

“Yeah... This is a good chance. I’ll tell you first.”

“Just me?”

“The others might not be ready for it. I feel like you won’t be shaken that much even if I told you.”

Hwaya puffed out her chest, apparently happy with what I said. She really was weak to compliments.

“You can tell me anything! I’ll hear you out, huhuhu!”

I patted Ina a few times since she was asking for my attention. Then, I messaged Hwaya.

[The enemies we faced in the last Event Dungeon was from the Luka continent’s Demon Army. Ludia told me about it, and I looked more into it, so I’m sure.]

[Luka continent...? Where Ludia used to live?]

[Yeah.]

[Eh... Doesn't that mean Ludia knows about this too?]

Why was she sad about that? As Ina kept poking my face, I tickled her for revenge.

“Kiki, I'm ticklish.”

[Ludia is from the Luka continent. It was thanks to her that I noticed it so quickly.]

[Ne... Nevermind. Sorry, I know I've been weird lately. It's unlike my usual calm and collected self. I have to fix it soon.]

Strange. Did the Hwaya I know go through cattle mutilation? The Hwaya I knew was always short-tempered and straightforward... Of course, I didn't say it aloud as I worried that the 'cool and collected' Hwaya would burn in rage.

[Hurry and get to the point.]

[It seems our world is getting attacked by two forces right now.]

[...]

[Because of that, we don't have much time. I was told that one of the forces would completely crossover in 2 years.]

Hwaya became silent. I also didn't say anything else. Ina was the only one making a sound, as she kept playing adorably. Without her, the atmosphere would have been heavier. For someone with an ice ability, she sure knew how to warm someone's heart! Could my daughter be the world's greatest daughter!?

Hwaya's silence soon ended. She sauntered up to me and pushed her face up against mine. I backed off a bit, flustered, and Hwaya frowned. I inadvertently froze. For someone with a fire ability, she sure knew how to freeze someone! Could she also be the world's greatest? I asked her slightly panicked.

“W-What is it?”

“... Are you okay?”

Though she was frowning just a moment ago, she was now looking at me with concerned eyes. I shrugged in response.

“Well, that's why I'm diligently climbing the dungeon. I heard I could do something if I conquered the dungeon within two years. Even so, it should be hard with just my strength alone, so— whoah!”

Hwaya suddenly pulled me into her embrace. Flustered, I froze. Ina, who ended up being squeezed between Hwaya and me, laughed.

“W-What's wrong? I'm not the only one in danger! The entire

Earth is in jeopardy!”

“But in the end, they’re all aiming for you. You’re their target, only because an unknown being gave you an unknown power.”

“B-But as you know, I’m quite strong... C-Can you let me go? Sorry, but I have someone I’m—”

“That’s none of my business.”

This woman just cut me off! Just when I took the courage to say it!

“What’s important is that you look strained and that I want to embrace you. “

“... Really.”

I responded brusquely, but to be honest, I might have slightly fallen for her. No, I fell for her a lot. This woman’s uselessly many charms really troubled me.

“Shin, you won’t run away, right?”

“Yeah.”

There was no doubt in her tone. It was as if she knew exactly how

I would act. I couldn't help but break out into laughter. At the same time, she hugged me even tighter.

“Good... Remember, I'll always be by your side. I won't let you bear everything alone... If... If you die, I'll still be by your side. Do you understand what I mean...?”

“Why would you... go so far?”

“If you really don't know the answer to that question, I'm going to burn you now... I'm surprised too, but right now, I'm the most serious I've ever been in my life.”

“I can't refuse... right?”

“Of course.”

How pressuring.

I didn't know whether she was consoling me or threatening me. But, to be honest, the load weighing down deep inside my heart seemed to have become much lighter. I decided to thank her honestly.

“Thanks, I'll be relying on you.”

“Good. I'm happy that you know my worth.”

“I’m happy because Mommy and Daddy are happy!”

Ina, who was still between us, shot her arms up in the air and shouted. We were taken aback by her sudden outburst, but soon, we met each other’s eyes and laughed. Then...

“I inadvertently ended up seeing a beautiful sight. I need popcorn.”

“Here’s the popcorn, Walker. nom nom.”

“Is... Is this the time to eat popcorn!? They’re acting like a family! I won’t allow this!”

“O Earth...!”

All of Revival’s members were there. We fell into a panic.

“H-How!?”

“I broke through the 60th floor and came to the guild house to rest when I saw you two filming a melodrama. I couldn’t let the others miss this, so I called them.”

“Walker, you...!”

When I turned around to look at Hwaya, I caught her hiding her

hand after giving Walker a thumbs up. I already saw you, Hwaya! When I was about to lecture them angrily...

[An Event Raid broke out in the First Dungeon! SS+ rank 500-man, 'Power Basilisk.' The guild, 'Desert Scorpion,' has requested for help from all guilds ranked D or above! You can participate in the Event Raid with members your guild who agrees to participate!]

Author's note:

Hwaya's counterattack was super-effective! Kang Shin becomes charmed!

Today's chapter brought to you with worries that Ludia and Ye-Eun are becoming wall decorations! It wasn't my intention as the author, but two people have stood up as the heroines... The popularity contest! The popularity contest!!

Next chapter will feature Revival and Shin becoming involved in the dungeons' competition. Look forward to it!

Chapter 170. What Is Not Allowed For Her

(1)

We all froze. First, I calmly took Hwaya off of me, and appeased Ina and put her down, as she wanted to stay with me.

“You’re already a father, Son.”

“Show of hands. Who wants to go?”

I ignored father and asked everyone whether they wanted to participate. There was no need to explain anything. As it was an Event Raid in the dungeon, we wouldn’t actually die. As such, it could only be beneficial. I assumed other guilds and explorers thought the same way. I didn’t know whether that would be of benefit or loss for us, but we didn’t need to avoid people just because we didn’t know them.

“I’ll stay out. I’m not strong enough. Maybe when I advance to the Second Dungeon...”

“I’ll stay out too, Shin-nim... My defense ability probably won’t be useful versus the giant basilisk.”

Walker and Shuna were the first to decline. Ye-Eun also raised her hand.

“I can’t go either, Shin. Until I learn the technique Master taught

me, I'll have trouble with monsters that have large bodies. I'll only damage my pride if I go."

Everyone else was quiet. In other words, Hwaya, father, Ludia, Sumire, Ina, and I would be going. I asked Ina.

"Ina, will you be okay?"

"Un! I got even stronger!"

Now that she was a dungeon explorer, she was undoubtedly stronger than before. The amount of mana she had even rivaled Hwaya's. Regarding mana, Ina was most likely the strongest amongst Earth's Awakened. It was also why she couldn't control her ability for such a long time...

"Un? You're crying, Daddy? Don't cry!"

"N-No, why would Daddy cry."

I patted Ina's head and smiled. Then, I turned to Ludia and asked.

"Will you be okay, Ludia?"

"My ability is supportive, so it'll be okay. I'll focus on supporting you and father."

“Haha, thanks.”

“Ludia, don’t make Yungoong ajusshi your father on your own. You better support me too.”

“Huhu, I’ll be expecting your support as well, Palludia.”

I didn’t need to ask Hwaya and Sumire. Hwaya was the strongest one in the guild besides me, and with her god’s true name, Sumire was stronger than Shuna. Plus, with Sumire’s unnaturally fast pace, I had the feeling she would cross over to the First Dungeon soon. Although Shuna was working hard with Ludia... Eh?

“By the way, Ludia, do you still party with Ellos?”

“No, I haven’t been able to contact him recently. We were also gone for two months, so we’re climbing separately. Shuna and I are strong enough on our own now.”

... It seemed that clearing Event Dungeons for two months successfully strengthened everyone. With a wry smile, I looked at everyone. Everyone appeared to have made up their minds.

“Alright, then the six of us should go.”

“This is the first time I’m seeing the First Dungeon’s explorers. I wonder how strong they are...”

“Wait a moment. Let me check if Lotte can come with us.”

I messaged Lotte, but she didn't say anything after replying, 'I trust Hero.' It seemed she was still busily training. No choice. If I had to fly, I would just have to use Sharana's ability or take the mana consumption to ride on Peika.

“Let's go then.”

Seeing that everyone gathered around me, I clicked the 'participate' button on the window. Then, just like when we entered Event Dungeons or teleported, the surrounding instantly changed.

We found ourselves on a rocky hill.

[The Event Raid communication channel has opened!]

[3 minutes to go! The raid will begin in 3 minutes!]

[Tsk, that's not enough time! Why doesn't the Lord give us more time!?!]

[Be content stopping him for 10 minutes, Ralph.]

A communication channel opened the moment we arrived, and voices of explorers flooded us. I first checked the terrain. We were at high altitude, on a hilltop about 3 kilometers in diameter. I

could see the cliffs around the edges. Including us, there were about a hundred or so people.

“Eh? There are some new faces!”

“What, is it a new guild? Why are there so few of them for a D rank guild?”

“Oi! What are your ranks!?”

“Everyone’s Gold!”

I shouted back at the man wearing an armor and a cape. Although Ina and Ludia are still Silver ranks, Ina was incredibly strong, and Ludia’s ability didn’t lose to anyone either.

The man’s cape had a yellowish brown scorpion. I could immediately tell that he was a member of Desert Scorpion, the guild leading the raid.

“Gold!? Gold ranks are participating in an SS+ rank raid? Hey, don’t you know your ranks? You should at least be level 80 for SS+ rank raids! You have to be Platinum, understand?”

“We won’t blame you if we die, so don’t worry about that.”

“Tsk, these newbies...”

“Ralph, stop trash talking and help with straightening up the terrain!”

“I’m going! Ptui.”

Ooh, how unpleasant. He spat at us and headed back to the direction of his guild. Father laughed as he took out his spear, but I stopped him.

“What’s wrong, Son? I’m just trying to educate someone on basic manners kindly.”

“Father, what floor are you on?”

“64th floor.”

“You’ll catch up soon, right? You can pick up your spear then. They’re the raid’s host and have the strength to back up their arrogance. Unless we’re definitely above them in strength, we can’t respond justly to their rudeness.”

“Haa... Fine. Since you’re our leader, father will listen to you.”

“Thanks, Father.”

“Kuhum, now that you’re a father, I can feel the sincerity in your words.”

“That has nothing to do with it!”

Was everyone here Platinum ranked? Indeed, I could feel each of them emanating powerful energies. We weren't inferior regarding stats, but the spirit they were emitting had entirely different qualities. The difference in the league created by levels. With Soul Guard raising my soul's league, I could more easily feel the difference. It was a complicated feeling that was hard to describe.

“Ku...”

“Wow, look at Shin's expression. He looks like he's about to die from anticipation.”

“But unni's expression says unni's about to die from loving Shin-nim too much...”

With the female member's looks, we were only getting more and more attention as time went on. Even so, no one openly made a move. It seemed they understood the importance of the upcoming raid.

“Oi, since you won't be able to deal decent damage, try to survive. We were stupid for thinking anyone from the First Dungeon would be dumb enough to join an SS+ rank dungeon without a plan. I'm going to say it clearly. Don't blame us if you die.”

“Thanks for worrying about us.”

I responded with a smile to the man, Ralph, who talked to us before. He raised his hand as if to say something else, but he soon clicked his tongue and walked away. Meanwhile, Revival's members were talking excitedly. They were forming a plan without me having to say anything!

“The Flame Drake was only a 100-man raid, but he was so powerful. I wonder how strong the Power Basilisk is.”

“Don't push yourself too much, Daughter. We're here to get stats. There's no need to overdo it and get ourselves in danger.”

“Just call me Hwaya, Ajusshi... Unless you want me to call you Father?”

“Hwaya Eleni Mastiford...!”

“Grandpa, you can call me Ina!”

“Oooh, that has an excellent ring to it. Call me again, Ina.”

“Grandpa!”

Hey, you guys talking like a harmonious family! Why are you doing that now!? You had all the chance to do it before!

“Let's at least form a basic plan. I can somewhat guess what kind

of attacks the basilisk will make.”

“Basilisks are known for their ability to turn people into stone. I hear their breaths also have a petrifying ability.”

“You don’t have to worry about petrification. With the power of the earth, I can neutralize even the basilisk’s petrification.”

Ludia declared confidently. I already began to think it was an excellent idea to bring Ludia along.

“It’s probably going to be huge...”

“Hwaya and Ina should stay back and attack from a safe distance.”

“Un! I’m stronger when I’m with Mommy!”

“Of course, huhu. Mommy is also strong with Ina.”

“Father, Sumire, and I will be in the front as usual. Sumire, there’s no need to use Athena’s power unless you absolutely need to.”

“Yes, I’ll focus on defense, Shin-nim!”

When I was about to say something father, the earth suddenly

began to tremble.

[The Event Raid begins. The Power Basilisk makes its appearance!]

With pounding hearts, we all waited for the Power Basilisk to appear. We took out our weapons, and I also summoned my three elementals. At the same time, I grabbed a Mana Potion. I was ready to drink the Mana Potion and explode with Peruta Circuit at any moment!

It slowly appeared. We couldn't hide our shock. Its body was over 300 meters long. Not only was it bigger than any monsters I've seen before, but it also emitted petrification energy just by opening its enormous mouth. I could see the surrounding turning into stone.

More importantly, its entire body was...!

“A suit!? What are you, the Iron Man?”

“So that's why it's called ‘power’!”

Hwaya made an exclamation of surprise as I yelled angrily. It was covered in a strange armor. Across it was several hundred meters long armor with geometric symbols which emanated powerful mana. It was as if it was wearing a power suit.

[Attack! If that mana seal fully activates, we're screwed!]

“I don't know what's happening, but let's first attack!”

Along with the shout from a member of Desert Scorpion, we also used our strongest attacks. Ludia struck the ground with her staff, making needle-like rocks shoot up and hurl toward the basilisk, while I created and threw a huge ice spear with Ruyue's power. Everyone in the raid seemed to have some long-ranged attacks, but only twenty or so had exceptionally powerful long-ranged attacks. The basilisk's armor easily blocked most attacks.

“Haaaap!”

Then, Hwaya created an enormous white fireball in the air and hurled it toward the basilisk. It landed on the basilisk's head, which was also covered in an armored mask, heating it up greatly. At the same time, Ina playfully waved her hand, freezing the mask with extreme freezing energy and shattering it easily. This daughter and mother combo... Amazing!

However, after being hit, the basilisk realized the attack had come from our guild, as it turned to our direction and shot a breath with a furious roar!

“O Earth!”

Ludia quickly transmuted the rock needles into an earthen

shield, while Sumire stood behind the shield as the second in defense. Once exposed to the breath, Sumire's shield and arms began to petrify slowly. However, just like she said, Ludia could easily cure Sumire. The other explorers, who also skillfully dodged the petrifying breath, cheered after seeing the basilisk's bare face behind its broken mask.

[Bravo! We got its mask off with the first wave of attacks!]

[Amazing! Who did that!?!]

[It was that Gold rank.]

[A Gold rank did that?]

[...]

[Shit, it's charging! It's going to use its tail to attack afterward!]

The ground began to tremble once again. Seeing that we were unaffected by its breath, the basilisk was charging toward us! Damn, we took its aggro too much! Despite how massive it was, or perhaps precisely because it was so massive, it shortened the distance between us quickly.

“Scatter! Everyone scatter! Hwaya and Ina, go with Ludia far behind the tanks! Everyone else, separate and attack whenever you see the chance!”

Hwaya hugged Ludia from the back and flew into the air. Ina also flew back with Hwaya. Father forcefully kicked off the ground to get away. As for Sumire...

“Sumire, sorry!”

“Shin-nim, i-it’s my pleas...!”

With her heavy armor and large shield, Sumire wasn’t as mobile as the others. I held her in my arm and flew up with Sharana’s power.

Most of the people in the basilisk’s path dodged, but there seemed to be slow people even among Platinum ranked explorers, as some could not avoid in time. The basilisk’s weight crushed them, instantly making their vitality hit zero. The basilisk was strong enough to one-hit K.O. Platinum ranked explorers. I could only imagine how much it would hurt if it hit me.

“Thank you, Shin-nim. Uu, I don’t think I can block it with my shield.”

“You just have to dodge its charges, cheer up.”

“... Yes! If Shin-nim says so, I’m sure I can do it!”

... Before I noticed, this child’s belief in me had almost turned

into a religious fanaticism.

After putting Sumire down, I flew back up. Including me, about thirty people were flying in the air. Platinum ranks were certainly different than others.

[Start from the right leg! Right leg, got it!?!]

[Oi, long-ranged attackers, go for its left eye first! Its mask is off, so obviously you should go for its head!]

[Ah, I've been curious for a while, but who's the epic witch controlling that fire? I'd like to hire you as my secretary.]

[I guarantee you're going to die in this raid, you shithead.]

The explorers simultaneously began to assault its right leg. The basilisk ignored the dozens of long-ranged attacks hurling toward its eye and breathed its petrifying breath at the close-range attackers closing in on its leg.

Half of the explorers shook off the breath with their high resistance and pierced their swords, spears, axes, and hammers at the basilisk's foot. On the other hand, the remaining half became partially petrified and had to fall back. Of course, with my abnormally high resistance, I quickly overcame the petrification and set its foot on fire with chaos flame. Although the power suit... or rather, carapace blocked the flame; it began to burn up. However, the flame then got smaller. It seemed its carapace had

the ability absorb chaos flame's mana to extinguish it.

[Heal!]

[Healers, move! If damage dealers go below half health, it's over!]

[Isn't the blonde girl in the priestess robe the famous crown princess from Luka continent? She was alive!]

[Focus on the basilisk, retard!]

Then, an explorer suddenly shot up into the air. It was a man wearing a blue armor and carrying a large sword. His cape also had the emblem of Desert Scorpion guild. There was only one reason why I paid any attention to him. It was because the amount of mana he was emitting was making me shake.

The Basilisk also discovered him and opened his mouth.

[Kyaaaaaaaaaaaa!]

“Ice Crash!”

After arriving at the basilisk's right leg in an instant, he slashed down with his sword. He accurately hit the part of the carapace weakened by chaos flame, which then exploded with a crackling noise. Shockingly, his attack didn't end with just that as it froze most of its right leg. Right, froze. The ice he creates seemed

incapable of melting, as it weakened the energy being emitted by the basilisk. I instinctively realized that his ice was of similar nature to my chaos flame.

When I raised my head, I saw him grinning at me. It was as if he was saying, ‘Your flame got extinguished half-way, but my ice froze him wonderfully!’ Sly bastard! If you froze him first, my flame would’ve broken its carapace and burned its leg!

I just wanted to take the bonus stats from the raid without going all out, but a switch turned on inside me. I didn’t want to lose to that bastard even if I died.

Difference in levels? Eat shit! My weapon isn’t my level, but this... I’ll make you regret provoking me!

Author’s note:

Hehehe, aren’t we all used to having longer chapters now? ... T.T

Actually, there was a place I could’ve ended the chapter, but it lacked the impact. As a result, 8500 characters... cough.

Chapter 171. What Is Not Allowed For Her (2)

With its right leg's carapace broken off, the basilisk let out a furious roar that reverberated across the entire hilltop. Several of the people who heard the terrifying roar then became stiff, and signs of petrification could be seen on their bodies. I also halted for a moment, but I soon snapped out of it with the help of Soul Guard and my mana resistance. I then immediately saved Sumire, who had frozen stiff.

[You can use Athena's power if you want.]

[Really, Shin-nim?]

[Yeah. Let's show them our strength. You also don't want to be looked down on, right?]

[Yes, Shin-nim! I understand!]

I fanned some wind toward Sumire, who was looking at me with respect and flew back into the air. After roaring, the runic patterns on the basilisk's carapace began to shine, and it shot small rock-like things everywhere. These rock-like bullets also petrified whoever they touched.

[Kyaaooooooooooo!]

The basilisk's roar continued. Unless there was continued healing, it was easy for people to die. Long-ranged attackers were pouring attacks at the basilisk's exposed face, but the basilisk swung its massive tail and blocked the attacks before they could hit its face. His tail then fired more bullets at all the explorers. I charged toward him as I dodged these bullets.

“Blade Rush!”

Massive monsters had a boundless life force, making them difficult to kill. However, their size also made them easy targets. I easily dodged the basilisk's tail swing and weaved through the rain of rock bullets. Then, I stabbed my spear into its left leg with full force. Chaos flame once again flared up above its carapace, and the blades from Blade Rush also hammered on its carapace. Of course, just this wasn't enough to damage him.

“Dark Thunder Explosion!”

The basilisk's body twitched for a moment, after which black lightning shot up from my body and poured into its carapace. The communication channel instantly became noisy.

[What's that!? Isn't that the 15th Floor Master's skill!?!]

[I haven't seen that in 40 years!]

[Can someone explain what happened? That guy isn't wearing something like the Dark Ratman Set in an SS+ rank raid, right?]

[Oi, once that skill hits, it paralyzes its target regardless of the target's strength. Attack now!]

Unfortunately, Dark Thunder Explosion's duration wasn't that long! The moment the skill ended, I once again struck down at the carapace on its leg, then backed off. Immediately afterward, its tail swung past where I was standing just a moment ago.

If it were to hit me, it would petrify the part of my body it hit, which would then be shattered by the following shock. It would be a fatal damage. In fact, one of the other explorers was hit and instantly died. These Platinum ranked explorers weren't all that much! How could they not read such a giant monster's movements?

Regardless, once people began to die left and right, the surviving explorers became more spiteful and poured more attacks toward the basilisk. Almost everyone was attacking its left leg instead of its frozen right leg.

“Haa!”

“Die!”

[Kugyaaaaaaaaaaa!]

At that moment, its carapace emitted a brilliant light. I instinctively flew up and avoided the light. Most of the flying

explorers did the same. However, several of the explorers on the ground couldn't do so.

These explorers then perfectly turned to stone.

[Damn it, its armor's activating! Priests, hurry!]

[Malph!]

[Its eyes are shining! Attack! Stop it!]

[Damn, was it too hard with 100 people...!?!]

[Stop being defeatist and use your damned skills!]

Thanks to someone's shout, bright lights began to shine from the ground. Among them was one particularly brilliant light. A beautiful girl holding an ornate shield was making the basilisk scream in pain... Wait, that's Sumire!

[Look, the basilisk is petrifying!]

[What!? Someone's petrifying the basilisk?]

[A god's power! That girl must have a god's true name!]

[An unknown explorer with a god's true name? What guild is she

from? She must be the guild master, right?]

[She's even young and pretty. She's just my type!]

[Hey, you son of a bitch. Who the fuck are you? If we fail this raid, I'm going to kill you. What guild are you from?]

Good, Sumire! Well done!

Sumire had undoubtedly created an opportunity for us to overturn the situation. Although the basilisk possessed a petrifying ability, it was pushed back by the Medusa's head on Athena's shield. Starting from its eyes, which were about to do something, it became partially petrified. The experienced explorers present did not miss this opportunity, shooting powerful attacks at the basilisk. Of course, father and I were among them.

Father contained a powerful shockwave in his spear and successfully dealt a blow that the basilisk could not ignore. He had aimed for its petrified face. Although the petrification was done by a god's power, since the basilisk possessed a petrifying ability, it wouldn't be surprising if it broke out of it sooner. It was better to shatter the petrified parts of its face before it recovered on its own.

However, I aimed for a different place. Several long-ranged attackers were focusing its face, and as its one unpetrified eye began to shine, I avoided its face.

“Haaaaaaaap!”

I descended from the sky like an arrow and surged up the energy of Mad Typhoon. A whirlpool of chaos flame became compressed and gathered at the tip of my spear. With a spirited shout, I struck down at the basilisk's massive tail.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kyaaaaaaaaak!]

Good, it was effective! With Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo, I had gotten much stronger. With the momentum created by my quick descent, my attack successfully shattered the basilisk's tail armor!

[The tail armor broke!]

[There's a crack in its back armor! Attack there!]

[Ah, wait! Stop!]

Two flying attackers charged toward the basilisk's back despite the dissuasive shout. They were both warriors holding a hammer and an axe respectfully. They seemed to be from the same guild, as they simultaneously struck down on the basilisk's back with their weapons filled with aura. Immediately afterward, the basilisk's back emitted a bright light. A message then rang out in my ear.

[Sage Time guild, annihilated!]

“A-Annihilated... They’re going to get sage time for sure...”

I was curious as to who came up with that guild name, but unfortunately, it wasn’t all that important right now. I broke out in a cold sweat as I checked the basilisk’s back. What took away the Sage Time guild members’ lives was none other than a group of flying snakes. There were hundreds of mini-basilisks shooting out from the basilisk’s back.

[Damn, this never happened before!]

[They’re going to split! Hurry up and kill them!]

The communication channel became noisy with shocked voices and curses. The magicians’ attacks became focused on the mini-basilisks, but their magic resistance was annoyingly high. In other words, warriors had to take care of them. The one who stepped up was the man who froze the basilisk’s right leg before.

[Magicians, focus on stopping the basilisk’s movement! Focus especially on its head! Warriors, kill the small ones and break the basilisk’s dorsal armor!]

He was most likely Desert Scorpion’s guild master. After shouting out his orders, he charged toward the group of mini-basilisks, followed by about ten flying warriors, all wearing the same fluttering Desert Scorpion cape. As I also didn’t want to miss

this opportunity, I hurriedly charged forward.

“Sharana, we’re going full speed!”

[Yes, Master!]

“Gale Track!”

There were finally guys that could boost my attack power. There was no way I would let others have them! I frantically accelerated and shot past the others.

‘No matter how high leveled you are, you won’t be able to catch up to my speed! I am the owner of Hermes’ true name and the contractor of the unique wind elemental, Sharana!’

[Who’s that!?!]

[He’s that Gold ranked guy.]

[Gold rank? With that speed? You’re kidding, right?]

A trail of chaos flame was left in the path I took. I charged toward the mini-basilisks like a comet. The first mini-basilisk that faced me blew up after being hit with my spear. Great! With this...!

“Come!”

[You used Provoke! All enemies in the area will attack you with great hostility!]

In an instant, I was surrounded by mini-basilisks. They seemed to be capable of petrifying people with their gazes as I could feel a ticklish sensation of resistance from parts of my body they were glaring at. Of course, they weren't strong enough to penetrate Soul Guard. I smirked and sent them flying. Most of them were killed in a single strike.

“Uaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

[Looks like we won't be needed. Turn! We're attacking its dorsal area!]

[Hm...]

Magic flashed from all sides, while the basilisk's attacks shook the earth. Of course, its armor was being broken by the explorers even now. Everyone present had the strength to threaten the basilisk's life. Perhaps, it was why this battle seemed especially exhilarating. After all, this was the first time fighting with explorers stronger than me!

However, I still wanted to defeat that guild master.

[Master, the wind energy is getting stronger!]

“Gather as much of it as you can! We’re going to make a huge attack!”

Even as I ordered Sharana, I constantly changed the direction of my charge and pierced through the mini-basilisks with my spear. Ten, twelve, fifteen, twenty...!

“A bit more...!”

“A god’s power!”

“Damn, is that guy a monster!?”

Then, along with the shocked exclamations of a few explorers, the basilisk stopped moving. It’s over 300-meter long armor was completely frozen white! It was undoubtedly that guild master’s attack... For a desert scorpion, you sure like using freezing attacks!

[Attack while Scizarnath’s power holds it back! It’s almost out of stamina! If we can properly break its armor, it will be our victory!]

His confident voice reached all the explorers through the communication channel. The explorers then used their most powerful skills they were saving to break the basilisk’s armor bit by bit. The armor that once covered its giant body perfectly was now in a pitiful state.

It was then that I finished the thirtieth mini-basilisk and prepared for Gale Track's final blow. I could feel the wind energy gathering around me from Peruta Circuit's powerful rotational force forming a storm-like whirlpool. With a grin, I shot up. Although I didn't obtain Ogre Power yet, Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo gave me just enough strength to try this.

[What's that whirlpool? It's flying up!]

[It's that guy.]

[Does he also have a god's true name?]

[No way. It's already surprising that a new holder of a god's true name appeared today. Throughout the entire First Dungeon, there are less than 20 people with a god's true name!]

'Yeah, keep talking!'

I was already hundreds of meters up in the air. The mighty wind whirling around my spear and body was so powerful that it was hard to see with the naked eye. However, I wasn't done yet.

"Gigant!"

The pressure on my arms instantly became stronger. Even with the stats, gods' true names, tattoos, and strength from Chaotic

Spear, it is hard to use Gigant. I could tell that I could only last about 2 minutes with this enlarged spear.

Thankfully, that was more than enough to finish off the basilisk.

“Sky God’s Rage!”

BOOM!

A golden lightning descended on the long and thick Chaotic Spear. The wind energy gathered from Gale Track changed its property through Sharana’s influence and began to empower Sky God’s Rage further. The lightning energy instantly became amplified, dying the clear sky in a golden hue. The lightning spear immediately grabbed everyone’s attention.

[I knew it, he’s a holder of a god’s true name!]

[Who is that bastard!? No, what is this guild!?]

[E-Eh...? Wait... The 1st place for guild contribution! It might get stolen!]

[Hey, stop! Getting 1st place over the host?]

[Did anyone tell them?]

[They said they were all Gold ranked! Would you have told them!?!]

[Hurry up and kill the basilisk before he attacks!]

[Please, if it were that easy, god's power wouldn't have been necessary!]

It was already hard to just kill it together, but it seemed there was some rule. Explorers sure liked to make things difficult... Of course, it was none of my business.

“Peika, come into the spear!”

[Kyahaha! It has an incredible energy, Master!]

The lightning was strengthened once again. I found it hard to keep my eyes open. However, I couldn't stop now. I forced my eyes open and tightened my grip on the enlarged Sky God's Rage spear. Then, as I descended toward the roaring basilisk, I shouted.

“I'll be the one to take its head!”

[You used Orc Lord's Warcry! All party members are cleansed of negative status effects. All party members' attack power increases by 50 percent for the duration. All party members become super-armored, unfazed by enemy attacks.]

Then, I activated the effect of Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo, which boosted the damage of a close-ranged attack skill by 50% once a day. Even though I was wearing armor, Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo appeared above it and glowed with a crimson light. Feeling the incoming threat, the basilisk shot a petrifying breath toward me, but it was blocked by the force of Sky God's Rage.

I became a streak of a crimson comet and shot down toward the basilisk.

As it was the final blow of a charge skill, my armor, and Giant Wolf's Tattoo boosted the damage by 110%, Gale Track boosted the damage by 200%, Orc Lord's Warcry boosted the damage by 50%, and finally, Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo boosted the damage by 50%. In total, the attack just now was increased by 410%. Of course, as that was just the increase, the actual damage I did was 510%. There was no need to describe its destructive power.

I wasn't done. I added Heroic Strike on top of everything. I scraped together every bit of mana in my body and poured it into my spear. As I swallowed the Mana Potion I had prepared in my mouth, I shouted.

“Divine Speed!”

My already unfollowable speed became not three times, but ten times faster. There was no chance for the basilisk to dodge my attack. I took the basilisk's petrifying gaze without being fazed, and struck my spear down on its forehead!

[Critical Hit!]

It was very fortunate. After all, the basilisk undoubtedly had bones! With Skull Breaker's effect, all critical damage was increased by 50%. As critical hits normally dealt 200% of the normal amount, with the Skull Breaker title's effect, the attack was amplified to 300%! I found it funny that I was playing with numbers so much, but the result wasn't funny in the slightest.

[Kugyaaaaaa!]

Once the spear collided with its forehead, it discharged the lightning of ultimate strength and pierced through its head. The spear, which was dozens of meters long, split the basilisk's head into two! The basilisk barely squeezed out its death throe before it became silent. From its split head, it no longer emitted the petrifying breath or gaze.

Immediately afterward, the armor left on its body detonated. Its body became dust and disappeared.

The SS+ rank 500-man raid boss was finished.

Author's note:

What is a sage time?

It is the short period of time given to the Braves who toiled through hardships and agony, where their brain functions the most rationally, allowing them to answer the most philosophical questions! Unfortunately, today in 2015, the meaning has changed somewhat, signifying the moments where those who suffered a great defeat or unexpected event questions their existence in OTL position.

The raid boss reward and meaning of the arc's title will be revealed next chapter. Look forward to it!

Also, the popularity contest will open up today! Don't forget!

Translator's note:

Sage time is the Korean term for the refractory period (aka, the period after orgasm).

Chapter 172. What Is Not Allowed For Her (3)

[Event Raid success! Out of a total of 117 participants, 83 survived and completed the raid! This achievement increases the reward!]

[You received 2 stat points for completing the Event Raid.]

[Rewards will be distributed in order of contribution. All guilds other than the annihilated guilds achieved the necessary minimum contribution! Guild masters will be rewarded in order of guild contribution. Leftover rewards will then be distributed among non-guild master explorers.]

[Guild Revival's contribution is the highest! Its guild master may choose a reward.]

[1. Evil Eyes of Petrification (Legend)

2. Mega Rock Breaker (Epic)

3. Rock Tail

...]

[Guild 'Revival' became C rank! When challenging Event Dungeons or Event Raids, when 5 or more guild members are present, all guild members' abilities will be increased by 7%!]

I raised my head. All the surviving members were staring at me. Then, the man who talked down to us in the beginning, Ralph, flew over to me with his cape fluttering.

“Hey! Pass over the picking right! You can't be thinking of taking the reward before the host, right?”

“Should the host always get the first pick?”

“Yes!”

“That's not what the dungeon's system seems to think.”

“Fool, it's a regulation! The host lets others participate in an Event Raid, and in exchange, the host chooses the reward first. It's a basic courtesy in the dungeon!”

It was an interesting claim. I felt like I had experienced it before. The part where some fools are trying to press an unwritten rule!

“But you requested for help because you couldn't have taken care of it alone. We accepted it because we had something to gain from it. There's no reason for us to hand over what's rightly ours.”

“You want to defy Desert Scorpion, the First Dungeon’s strongest guild? Do you need me to explain why one plus one is two?”

“Everyone understands that one plus one is two, but no one understands why we have to give up something that belongs to us.”

With that, I turned and stared at Desert Scorpion’s guild master, who was standing in mid-air without looking our way.

“What do you think? My guild was acknowledged as the first place in the contribution by the system, and probably by everyone else here. Will you not accept this result?”

“...”

He was silent. Meanwhile, Ralph tried to grab me by the collar but backed off after seeing Peika discharge a bit of lightning. Then, he shouted.

“The system is weird, too. Without Master, it would have been impossible for you to deal the final blow to the basilisk!”

“Your guild master raised contribution thanks to me too. Regardless, I want to hear his thoughts. No, before that, I want to know. Did this ‘regulation’ apply to you when you weren’t hosts?”

No one responded. The communication channel buzzed.

[Hey, Newbie. Desert Scorpion is an S ranked guild. Simply put, it's one of the strongest guilds in the First Dungeon. I like what you're trying to do, but if you don't follow the rules they created, you won't have a good future.]

[Isn't it obvious that this rule only applies when they're the host? Do you know how much crap they spout in the raids they're invited to? Everyone tries their best to get the first place contribution, so who'd want to give it up? Tsk, those bastards.]

[I was impressed with your spearmanship, do as you want. With your guild's strength, I doubt the Desert Scorpion will be able to do much. Plus, I'm looking forward to it... The day you overtake them will be the day the dungeon's caste system changes.]

[Let me add something. Can you give one of your guys to our guild? Just one. Honestly, Just one.]

[Where is your confidence coming from, you pervert? Who are you? Don't change your voice and use your real voice. Come on.]

I looked at Desert Scorpion's guild master once again. He finally opened his mouth.

"I witnessed your strength. To be honest, I was impressed... My guild can make you even stronger. Throw away your title as a guild master and come to us. If it's you, we can even make you the vice-

guild master. Since you came this far on your own, you should know what the wise thing to do is.”

It was a complete non-sequitur.

“I see.”

I threw away any hesitation I had and picked the Evil Eyes of Petrification. Immediately afterward, my eye stung with a burning sensation. I could barely hold in my scream.

“Kuuuuk!”

“Ah, that bastard!”

“He chose the reward...! Damn, is that...!?”

[The Evil Eyes of Petrification tests your capability as its wielder. Peruta Circuit rotates strongly! Mad Typhoon activates! Soul Guard activates! High-rank Spirit Mastery activates! Overwhelm activates! The power of all elementals connected to you undulates!]

[The Evil Eyes of Petrification acknowledges you as its rightful owner. The power of petrification is vested in your eyes. You can draw the full strength of Evil Eyes of Petrification.]

[You obtained the Evil Eyes of Petrification! Your magic stat increases by 100. With just your will, you can petrify all targets with magic resistance under S rank. You can also turn petrified targets back to normal. You can remove petrification status effect from targets petrified through other means. At your current level, depending on the amount of mana you imbue, you can petrify targets up to SS+ rank. Even if a target cannot be petrified, its movement speed will be decreased if exposed to your gaze! Overwhelm skill strengthened the Evil Eyes of Petrification! It will increase further through intelligence stat, magic stat, and Overwhelm's skill level.]

[Your resistance to all types of Evil Eyes increases.]

[You become the focal point of gods with inheritances related to the eyes.]

When the pain disappeared, and I regained my senses, I blinked my eyes as I thought over the messages I had heard. My eyes didn't hurt anymore. In fact, they felt extremely refreshed. I felt like I could see all the mana in the world.

A thought crossed my mind; I immediately asked Ruyue.

“Can you make me a mirror?”

[Un!]

A large mirror of ice instantly appeared, reflecting my entire body. I put up my helmet's visor and checked my eyes. I spat out.

“Ah, shit.”

My black Korean irises had become golden. Although the center of my irises took a hint of gold after contracting Peika, it had been barely noticeable. Now, however, it was easy for anyone to see.

Plus, almost as if the entire milky way had been stuffed inside my eyes, countless particles of light were sparkling within.

No, my eyes became anime! It looks like I have eighth-grade syndrome! What am supposed to do when I use these eyes!? Yell, ‘Banishment, this world!’???

[Master became like me!]

Peika deactivated Spirit Aura on her own and coiled around my arm. It seemed she was thrilled. Wait, this meant my eyes were like Loretta's. Perhaps it wasn't so bad...

In any case, the members of Desert Scorpion didn't look so happy.

“That bastard got Evil Eyes...!”

“I can’t believe it. Evil Eyes...”

“We must have our revenge! What guild was he from?”

“Revival! From here on now, guild Revival is banned from the Residential Area!”

After realizing what I obtained, Desert Scorpion’s guild members became enraged and caused a ruckus. Meanwhile, the guild master slowly descended from the sky toward me. I could see his eyes flashing with subdued anger.

However, what he said next was completely unexpected.

“You, are you an explorer of Beyond?”

“... How did you know?”

“Because Revival isn’t a guild within the First Dungeon. I looked at the list of guilds this afternoon, so I’m sure. The only way your guild could be here is if your guild was of Beyond’s affiliation. After all, only Beyond’s guilds can be invited to the raids from all dungeons.”

That’s... amazing! I thought we could participate in the First Dungeon’s raid because I was originally from the First Dungeon, but it seemed that wasn’t the reason. However, after confirming that I was from Beyond, he continued with an even more enraged voice.

“You Beyond explorers always act so rampantly. Evil Eyes... You dare take Evil Eyes from the Event Raid I hosted!?”

“Sorry, but this belongs to me. I’m just saying this in case you somehow believe otherwise.”

“How arrogant. Even if you came to possess Evil Eyes, do you think you could wield it properly with your low level?”

“Mm, if you want to continue talking, can you pick your reward first? Other people are waiting to pick theirs, you know.”

I then added.

“Also, can you get out of my face? You’re even uglier up close.”

“You and your guild won’t be able to enter the First Dungeon’s Residential Area. You’ll pay for taking Desert Scorpion lightly.”

“How?”

He snorted at my innocent question.

“You won’t be able to use any shops or auction houses. My guild has the power to make that happen. Also, you won’t be able to see Event Dungeons or Event Raids for the rest of your life.”

“Oh, that’s quite surprising!”

I wondered since when non-administrative guilds could do such a thing. I suspected that an administrative guild was backing them up.

However, even if what he said was true, we could simply use other dungeons’ shops and auction houses. Event Dungeons and Event Raids? We could simply go to other dungeons’ Event Dungeons and Event Raids. At this moment, I became certain. That was, becoming a Beyond explorer had freed me from the conflicts between the explorers and guilds of the First Dungeon.

Since I knew that, I smiled lightly.

“That’s very scary.”

“Kuk...! Know that no explorers will participate in any Event Dungeons or Event Raids, you host. Let’s see how long you can continue to climb the dungeon alone... One more thing.”

He grimaced.

“Don’t become involved with Daisy Ectradion. Otherwise, what I just said will only be a child’s play compared to what you’ll go through.”

With that, he turned around and left. I grabbed the Chaotic Spear, which had fallen after the effect of Gigant wore off, then tilted my head.

“Daisy Ectradion? Who’s that?”

His words remained in my mind. My intuition told me that the name would come up again. I looked over at the explorers, who were talking amongst themselves to choose their rewards, while I thought I should go back and ask Loretta about it.

That very night.

[An announcement to all explorers of the First Dungeon. It has come to light that the First Dungeon’s S ranked guild, Desert Scorpion, violated the First Dungeon’s rules and bribed an administrative guild to oppress other explorers for personal reasons. Four out of five administrative guild masters have testified. Thus, Desert Scorpion has been demoted to D rank, and will eternally be restricted to 10 maximum members.]

[Please hurry. Unless guild members withdraw until the maximum member limit is met, guild members, including the guild master, will be randomly kicked out. Also, all members that withdrew will be unable to enter another guild for ten years, and will forever lose the right to become a guild master.]

[The guild master and members of Desert Scorpion will be unable to participate in Event Dungeons and Event Raids for 50

years. They are also forbidden from hosting Event Dungeons or Event Raids. Furthermore, their contribution points in Floor Master battles will be deducted, and they must pay 1.5 times the average amount for all items in the Floor Shop.]

[Desert Scorpion members who withdraw within the next one hour will only face the first penalty.]

That night, Desert Scorpion completely collapsed. From what I heard, the vice-guild master was the first to leave.

Isn't this too much, Loretta!? I appreciate the sentiment, but... the love is too much!

Author's note:

If you touch small Loretta, you just die. It's game over.

The conflict between First Dungeon's explorers and guild, and a little foreshadowing was shown this chapter. Desert Scorpion isn't the only S ranked guild, so you don't have to be disappointed!

Also, I'm sure most readers figured out who Daisy Ectradion. In that case, you should know who this chapter title refers to! Shin, let's go sell things!

Chapter 173. What Is Not Allowed For Her

(4)

“Daisy Ectradion?”

“Yes, Loretta. Do you know who that is?”

The next day, seeing Loretta act completely nonchalant, I decided to give up asking her about what happened with Desert Scorpion. Instead, I asked her the other question I had. If Desert Scorpion’s guild master told me not to get involved with this person, I figured that Loretta knew about her as well. However, as soon as she heard what I said, she took out her axe and smiled.

“So, who’s that woman, Shin-nim?”

“I’m the one who asked! Also, aren’t you taking that axe out way too often lately!?”

“But Shin-nim is the bad one for asking about other women knowing how I feel.”

“What’s bad is Loretta’s head! Didn’t I explain!?”

“Then, I’ll stop joking and...”

“You were really joking, right? You won’t use that axe, right!?”

“... Huhu.”

Loretta simply answered with a bright smile. That meant she wasn't joking, right..?

“Sorry, Shin-nim. I can't tell Shin-nim even if I want to. But I think Shin-nim already has somewhat of an idea who she is.”

“I do... yeah...”

I didn't know exactly who Daisy Ectradion was. However, the only thing he knew about me was that I had a god's true name and that I was Beyond's explorer. In other words, this Daisy Ectradion was likely to be Beyond's second explorer. It was the strange woman who offered to take my corpse.

I was concerned about her. Just like the first explorer, it seemed she didn't want to leave her mansion. Why wasn't she exploring the dungeon? Perhaps, Desert Scorpion's guild master had something to do with it.

“Then do you want to stroll through the Residential Area and asked around?”

“Why are you linking your arms with mine?”

“To make the best use of our time, huhu.”

In the end, Loretta dragged me off to the First Dungeon's Residential Area. However, the people that saw us together acted rather... strange.

“Hey, is that guy...”

“Revival's guild master, right? The holder of Evil Eyes.”

“Evil Eye holders are even rarer than holders of god's true names... There are less than ten of them!”

“I hear he has a god's true name too.”

Ah, my Evil Eyes gave away my identity! They had to be talking about me since I was probably the only one who recently gained Evil Eyes. However, their following words made me drip with sweat.

“I only found out with this incident that administrative guilds also have ranks.”

“Look at him! He looks like a natural women magnet. It's not surprising that he could even seduce the Fairy Garden's famous queen.”

“They're walking around quite publicly. Did Desert Scorpion not know about this?”

“He doesn’t appear often in the Residential Area. It looks like he’s trying to show off right now.”

“He sent Desert Scorpion to their death so it’s understandable.”

“Desert Scorpion simply paid the price for their deeds. They’re the ones who bribed an administrative guild to try to destroy an innocent new guild. They got what they deserved.”

I looked back at Loretta. She was happily humming as she pressed her body against me. I sang the national anthem inwardly and asked Loretta.

“Loretta, tell me honestly. What’s your goal for walking around this?”

“I’m advertising to everyone so other women won’t bother Shin-nim!”

“And?”

“I’m warning others who might bother Shin-nim or Shin-nim’s guild!”

She was brutally honest. It seemed she wasn’t really avoiding the matter with Desert Scorpion.

“Really, I didn’t think there would still be such a dirty guild remaining in the First Dungeon! I got slightly angry and ended up being a bit overzealous. The administrative guild almost became four, huhu.”

“F-Four!?”

“Don’t worry, Shin-nim, it was resolved peacefully. All administrative guild masters are close friends!”

There’s a liar here! It seemed Loretta understood what I was thinking, as she put her hand on her mouth and smiled with her eyes curled to a crescent shape.

“There’s nothing to worry about. Everything I did was within my authority, so there won’t be anyone who won’t acknowledge it. Harming other guilds or explorers for the benefit of one’s own guild is strictly forbidden in the dungeon.”

“That’s good, then.”

All the attention we were getting was starting to get annoying. When I glanced over them, they seemed to have thought I would attack with my Evil Eyes as they all turned away scared.

“Huhu, I’m so happy.”

“That’s... good.”

Seeing the extremely happy expression on Loretta's face, I could only smile wryly. Since she did it for my sake, I decided to enjoy this moment as well.

Soon, however, a man stood in front of us, blocking our way. It was Desert Scorpion's guild master!

"Well... done."

"Yeah, really. You made it sound like you could do whatever you wanted with the First Dungeon, but it seems there are proper laws in this place, huh?"

"This won't be the end of it! No, this is only the beginning!"

He gritted his teeth and shouted. Of course, purely in terms of strength, he was stronger than me. I could feel him already trying to overwhelm me with spirit. Trying to kill me my spirit in the middle of the Residential Area... This guy had to be nuts. I held Loretta back, who was about to step forward angrily. I made up my mind to try out the Evil Eyes.

I would get in huge trouble if I accidentally turned bystanders into stone, but I suspected that the magic resistance of an S ranked guild's guild master wouldn't be lower than SS+ rank. Even if the petrification went through, I could always cancel it, so there was no worry. In the first place, the spirit he emitted was also threatening to people with low abilities, so we were doing the same thing.

I poured mana into my eyes, and the golden Evil Eyes began to shine brilliantly. Even I could tell that a bright light was coming out of my eyes. Desert Scorpion's guild master's spirit immediately subsided. He gritted his teeth to hold his stance.

“Kuk! You... You can already wield the Evil Eyes so freely...!”

“Sorry, but I'm a lot stronger than you think. I'm warning you now. I'm already busy with everything going on in my world, so don't bother me. If you do, I'll make you regret it.”

“Ha...! I already lost everything because of you. I have nothing left to lose!”

I smirked.

“Because of me? If someone overheard, they'd think I was the guild master of a large guild that bribed an administrative guild to harass and threaten small guilds that got in our way.”

“... Mark my words. You'll regret what you did! Remember that you made an enemy of the holder of Scizarnath's true name. I'll kill you one day, Earth's Hero!”

He's saying that knowing that I'm Earth's Hero? How can he act like he's the victim when he simply paid for the crimes he committed? I guess the dungeon has people like him too... No, perhaps, being an explorer for dozens of years is what made him

change.

In any case, I wasn't afraid of him whatsoever. I saw his strength during the raid. I knew that he had a god's true name and that he was currently much stronger than me. However, the time we spent was different. He said he'd kill me one day? Fool, you already lost your chance when you said 'one day' instead of 'a week' or 'a month'!

I deactivated the Evil Eyes' power with a smirk. Only then did he pick himself up properly, still glaring at me intently. It was then that I remembered something. He was the best person to ask about Daisy Ectradion.

“Who's Daisy Ectradion?”

“If you're Beyond's explorer, you should know that deserter wench. I already warned you. Don't get involved with her. Don't think about helping her either.”

“Deserter...”

“That's right, she's a filthy deserter! A deserter that dared to defy me...! Just like you, I will kill her too.”

He turned around, leaving me behind. However, Loretta caught him with his words.

“Hold on, customer. How can you just leave?”

“Fairy Garden’s master...! You’re not satisfied with taking everything from me? What else do you want?”

“Of course there’s something I want.”

Loretta tilted her head like he just asked the most obvious question.

“You announced that you’d kill another world’s explorer. You can’t be expecting me to gloss over it. Plus, you mentioned another world’s name and threatened to kill its Hero... As the dungeon’s administrator, I cannot let that slide.”

“So what, you’re going to kill me?”

“No.”

Loretta smiled brightly.

“From this moment on, you are no longer a dungeon explorer. Moreover, you’ll have to promise that you’ll never do anything to hurt Shin-nim. Through a Soul Contract, of course.”

“D-Don’t be ridiculous! You can’t do that to me! What right do you have to—“

At that moment, a door suddenly opened up. He tried to enter it,

then screamed. The door was closing before he could pass through it. Loretta said with a slightly lowered tone.

“I can see how much Sipua is looking out for you. Threatening another explorer is a grave offense that is strictly forbidden in the dungeon. When that explorer is a Hero, the punishment becomes unimaginably heavy. Dungeon explorers are expected to help each other. Didn’t Sipua teach you properly?”

“Y-You...!”

“You freely oppressed others with Sipua’s backing, so you have expected that the same could happen to you. It seems you prevented explorers that went against your guild from using the Residential Area’s facilities? You should be glad you aren’t being punished by the Lord personally. If it wasn’t for me, you wouldn’t be able to keep your life.”

“You. Who are... Kuk!”

He knelt on the ground. I widened my eyes. I could feel that his strength disappearing. His soul’s league, his powerful constitution, and boundless mana, they were all disappearing! Now, he only had the strength of a level 30 explorer. It was probably the mana and strength he built up through training outside of levels. Most of it should be from the god’s true name.

A sparkling piece of paper appeared in mid-air. Loretta caught it and took out a pen.

“Now, let’s see... What should I write to make you suffer more... Huhu.”

“Loretta, was the reason we strolled around the Residential Area today...”

“Don’t ask me that. Just think of it as a good wife helping her husband!”

Loretta expected us to run into him. No, she baited him to come. Once he saw us, he would undoubtedly threaten me, and Loretta would then punish him thoroughly.

Everything had gone as she planned.

“Loretta, I can’t quite understand. How can someone lose his qualification as an explorer so easily?”

“Didn’t I tell you? Heroes receive special treatment in the dungeon too. At the very least, they shouldn’t be threatened by other explorers, should they? Of course, if someone threatens to murder a Hero, he must face a grave punishment. And the one who administers that punishment is...”

Loretta pointed her pen toward herself. Her calm smile gave me a chill.

“I’m so glad that I could catch him before Sipua got to him! I was worried that she warned him beforehand!”

“You... bitch...!”

“Don’t you know that cursing at an administrative guild’s guild master is also punishable? Regardless, I’ll be adding to your list of crimes.”

I came to understand that making an administrative guild’s guild master was disastrous.

Then, a woman appeared mid-air.

“Loretta, you! How could you do this to my Lod— kyak!”

“You need to be disciplined too, Sipua. Stay put in your guild house and wait for your punishment.”

She was instantly sent back by a wave of Loretta’s hand. After taking care of her like swatting a fly, Loretta threw the contract in her hand at the man gasping for breath on the ground.

“Quietly read it and sign it. If you do, your punishments won’t increase any further. Do it for Sipua, who cares about you.”

“Ku.... Kuaaaaaaa!”

Just like that, he lost his qualification as an explorer and was kicked out. Furthermore, he was forbidden from meddling in my

affairs in any way. Everything happened under Loretta's leadership. Seeing me stare at her blankly, Loretta said carefully.

“Shin-nim is busy with clearing the dungeon and matters back on Earth, so I can't have Shin-nim distracted by trash like him. I can only do these types of things... D-Do you think I went overboard? I simply did what was within my authority to do, don't hate me...!”

“N-No, I was just surprised because Loretta sent him away so cleanly. Thank you. It's just that... I didn't think he'd be threatening even if I left him alone.”

“Shin-nim, that kind of thinking is naïve.”

Loretta's expression suddenly became more serious.

“Don't think that Shin-nim is the only special person. Even after losing their power as a dungeon explorer, there are many people who can threaten Shin-nim. Not making any enemies or cleanly destroying all enemies. These are the only choices Shin-nim has. Of course, I think the former is much better. Though most explorers also think the same way, there are always outliers like that trash. So if Shin-nim makes enemies, make sure to tell me about them.”

Loretta continued with a firm voice.

“I'll take out the trash.”

“... From now on, I’ll take care of it, so Loretta doesn’t have to do anything.”

She was right, I was naïve. I had the Dimensional Travel skill. If I really wanted to harass another world’s explorer, I could think of many ways to do so. Although I wouldn’t do something so troublesome, there were many crazies in the world; ones that did things without thinking about the consequences, ones that only lived for revenge.

It seemed I relied too much on the assumption that personality was part of the qualification to be a First Dungeon explorer. I should have known that people could change. Only after Loretta took care of the dirty work did I realize this. Really, I was wasting my intelligence stat.

“If possible, don’t make enemies. If I do, destroy them thoroughly. That’s it, right?”

“If possible, it’s better to use Soul Contracts to tie their lives down.”

... Still, Loretta’s methods were iron-blooded!

“By the way, the wisest thing Shin-nim could have done was to not participate in the raid. Although Shin-nim’s guild is strong, it’s still not in a position of absolute strength.”

“Then from now...”

“No, it’s fine now. Fortunately, we crushed a guild and its guild master. I doubt anyone will try to be Shin-nim’s enemy. It really turned out well!”

Loretta smiled as if to ask for my agreement. I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

“R-Rather than that, since I got the information I wanted, I’m going to go.”

“To Daisy Ectradion?”

“Uh, mm... Yeah.”

“Okay, let’s go!”

Loretta linked her arms with mine again and shouted joyfully. I had somewhat expected she would do so.

With a bitter smile, I headed to Beyond’s Residential Area. It was time to meet Daisy Ectradion. Of course, my arm was still linked with Loretta.

Author’s note:

The iron-blooded wife, Loretta. She’ll destroy anyone who dares

to touch her lover!

Chapter 174. What Is Not Allowed For Her

(5)

I ended up coming to the guild house with Loretta without much thought, but... wasn't this the first time I brought Loretta here? Yes, it was... After realizing that, I began to sweat.

‘If Hwaya or Ludia sees me...!’

A war that destroys the entire Residential Area might break out! However, I soon became relieved after discovering that no one was in the guild house. Loretta pulled on me.

“Come on, Shin-nim. Let's go!”

“Ah, yeah.”

Loretta should have an idea about who's in my guild. Was she not curious? Though that's why I thought, I didn't ask her. There was no reason to pull back the disaster I avoided.

“Make sure to introduce me to Shin-nim's guildmates next time, okay? Huhu.”

“Ek!”

Loretta... You scary woman!

As I had already explored Beyond's Residential Area, there wasn't much fog, and it wasn't hard to find the second explorer, Daisy Ectradion's mansion.

"It's been a while since I've been here."

"Re... Really?"

"Yes... I didn't think I'd ever come back."

"You're the one who suggested coming along."

"Yes, I'm extremely happy because I'm with Shin-nim."

I didn't respond and continued to walk silently. She also followed suit without saying anything. After 20 minutes, we finally arrived at the second explorer's mansion. Only then did I sigh and come to a stop. Really, I thought I'd die from the awkwardness.

[Go back.]

Now, I felt like I understood what the mana surrounding this mansion did. As such, I wasn't surprised when the communication channel got noisy.

[I came because I have something to talk to you about. Can you make time? If possible, I'd like to add you to my friend list.]

[Friend list? You don't even know my name. There's no way you could... Don't tell me.]

[Can I?]

[... Go ahead.]

I added Daisy Ectradion, and she accepted it. I immediately messaged her.

[As you expect, I met with Desert Scorpion's guild master. He talked about you.]

[Lodert Hydelcyon, head of Cyon Empire's Royal Knights.]

[Yes, him.]

It was the first time I heard his full name, but I still answered calmly. I felt like I was worthy of getting an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor.

[You... If you fought him at your current strength, there's no way you could be safe and sound.]

[The reason you're cooped up in your mansion is related to him, right?]

[What if it is?]

I faced Loretta. She tilted her head cutely. Nowadays, she was trying to show off her charms whenever she could. She must have realized it was working!

[Him and his guild are over. It was found out that they bribed an administrative guild.]

[How could that... Could it be the person you brought along?]

[Precisely.]

There was no answer for a while. Then, the fog covering the mansion cleared up a bit, and the mansion's gate opened.

[I want to hear what happened.]

I felt like I would get an alert saying 'Quest Success!' With a smile, I entered the mansion with Loretta. The mansion must have been neglected for a long time as all sorts of thornbushes, vines, and weed covered the area. She must have never left the estate... I called Sharana and Peika.

“Can you clean up the garden?”

[Of course! Should I cut everything up?]

[I'll burn everything. Let's go, annoying wind girl.]

[After you, perverted worm-ssi.]

Please... don't fight...! Regardless of their relationship, the garden was cleared up in 3 minutes with their cooperation and went back to being a spacious garden. It was as if one hundred professional gardeners had worked on it.

[Elementals are... really strong.]

After we finished cleaning up the garden, the mansion's front door opened and its spacious hall showed itself beyond the door. I entered the door along with Loretta and the elementals. Even after they finished the job, Sharana and Peika didn't think to go back. Sharana sat on my shoulder modestly, while Peika coiled around my arm. Since I wasn't in battle and had to worry about using mana, I didn't particularly mind them being out.

[I'm on the second floor. The room furthest into your left.]

I opened the door to that room. I expected it to be extremely messy, but it was actually immaculate. The window taking up the entire side of the room was open, letting air through. Daisy Ectradion was on the bed in the corner of the room.

She was lying face down, wearing nothing but a white dress shirt. Her black lace panties were in full view, but Loretta poked my eyes

to block the view. Ow!

“What are you doing, Loretta!?”

“Kuk, so the Evil Eyes can petrify me too... Huhuhu, you’ve grown so much, Shin-nim!”

Loretta shook her hands, and her partially petrified fingers went back to normal. She gave me a meaningful smile, but I continued to quibble.

“Why did you poke my eyes!?”

“If you don’t look away quickly, I’m going to attack you again!”

Damn, but I want to see more! I’m kidding, of course!

While I looked away, Loretta approached Daisy Ectradion and shouted.

“Why aren’t you wearing anything underneath!? Don’t tell me you’re trying to seduce my Shin-nim!? Do you want to get hit, customer?”

“I don’t have... the strength... skirts are... uncomfortable.”

“Hurry up and wearing something!”

“I only have the uniform...”

“Uuuu! Then at least cover yourself with a blanket!”

It took another 30 seconds before I was allowed to look again. Daisy Ectradion was now sitting on the bed, wrapped in her blanket like a sushi roll. From her uncomfortable expression and her fully buttoned up dress shirt, I could tell that Loretta buttoned her up too.

I somewhat expected it from what Lodert Hydelcyon said, but she was gorgeous. Her ash-like hair flowed down her shoulders, and her ominous red eyes had a magic power that drew people in. They were undoubtedly Evil Eyes of some sort. I could recognize it more clearly now that I possessed them as well.

Her facial features were slightly unnatural. Her red irises took up more space in her eyes than the sclera, making her look a bit creepy. Her nose was small and stout, while her lips were overly thin and ash-colored like her hair. Also, her ears were small and sharp. Her lips and ears were especially unnatural. Her skin was also a pale grey-white. After a bit of thinking, I asked her.

“Can I ask what race you are...?”

“Un... I’m a grey elf.”

“I see.”

She narrowed her eyes and stared up at me. Then, she asked.

“What happened... to Lodert Hydelcyon?”

“Simply put, he picked a fight with my guild and got his guild destroyed. He lost his qualification as a dungeon explorer and was kicked out to his world.”

“To his world? My world... Sylon continent was ruined. It’s been taken over by the Book Walkers.”

I immediately made a silent prayer. Good luck surviving, Lodert.

Ectradion became quiet after that and looked at Loretta who was standing next to me.

“Did you do it?”

“Of course. He can’t set foot in the dungeon anymore.”

“I... see...”

She seemed to be immersed in thought. Then, she surprisingly bowed.

“Sorry, but I can’t-do it. I can’t enter your guild.”

“I didn’t say anything, did I...?”

“My Evil Eyes. They receive others’ thoughts or send them my thoughts. Because you possess Evil Eyes, I can only read a little... but I thought you were lying, so I read your mind. Sorry.”

She got me! To think she could do it so stealthily without me noticing. Damn, it was my fault for letting my guard down based on her appearance. I hit my cheeks, then asked her.

“How about now?”

“Amazing. I can’t read your mind at all... Really. It’s been a while.”

“Well done, Shin-nim.”

“Don’t pat me.”

“Ah, the woman. I couldn’t read you at all, but I could read it just now... Why didn’t you do what you were thinking of?”

“Whoops. It seems I let my guard down. Geez, I’m still inexperienced. Shin-nim, can you leave the room for a moment? I’ll call you back once I compose myself.”

“I feel like you’re going to do something to Ectradion, so no.”

“Tsk.”

Loretta gave up on her plans to bury Daisy Ectradion. Relieved, I asked her.

“It was my final goal to ask you to enter my guild. For now, I’ll be happy if you continue your activities as an explorer. There’s no one to hold you back now.”

“No, that’s not it.”

She widened her eyes, then blinked a couple of times.

“I... want to try again. My world collapsed, but if I climb the dungeon again... maybe... I can chase them out...”

“Then why?”

“I’m... a necromancer.”

She continued.

“I can’t obtain corpses in the dungeon...”

“Don’t you have any?”

“On the decisive day, half. In the dungeon, the remaining half to Hydelcyon. I lost everything.”

With that, she raised her head and flashed her red eyes. I instinctively knew she was trying to convey something to me. I relaxed my Evil Eyes and let her thoughts flow into me in a way that it wasn't overbearing.

Daisy Ectradion was the head of the military unit of Selone, an elven country in the Sylon continent. At a young age, she was chosen to become a First Dungeon explorer. She proliferated and became the strongest in Selone. As she continued to get stronger, she could turn stronger demonic beasts into undead. Eventually, she obtained a god's true name and entered Beyond. It went without saying that she was the forefront warrior in the war against her world's invaders, the Book Walkers.

However, the day her world's Hero died, she lost half of the army she commanded. The surviving people lost their will to resist the Book Walkers, but Ectradion continued to fight. It was then that a conflict broke out between her and Lodert.

Lodert had always harbored evil intentions against her, and using the Event Raid that erupted when they were climbing the dungeon together; he crushed the remaining half of her forces. As they belonged to different countries, the Empire who wanted to command Ectradion as they wished supported Lodert's scheme. As Ectradion knew this, she returned to her mansion without going back to Sylon. Lodert had wanted her to offer her body in exchange for letting her recreate her army, and Ectadion had refused to accept his terms.

When she tried to obtain corpses some other way, she could not achieve her goals in Sylon because Lodert obstructed her. It was the same when she tried to obtain them from other worlds' explorers, as the guild Lodert operated, the Desert Scorpion, prevented them. In the first place, monsters strong enough to help clear Beyond didn't come out for sale. She was no longer allowed to make an army for herself.

In the end, rather than submitting to such a cowardly man, she decided to give up on her world. Just like that, she became a neet.

Even if she had a god's power, as a necromancer, she couldn't advance in the dungeon by herself. It was especially the case as an explorer of Beyond. Just like that, for the past 73 years, she was lying on the bed of her mansion.

"I already gave up. Corpses... To clear Beyond's 12th floor, normal corpses won't do."

"So you want to just die in your mansion."

"Un... Thank you for ruining Hydelcyon and making him so miserable. Now, there's no reason for me to raise my whip. I have... no regrets."

With that, she lay back down and closed her eyes. I could finally see her clearly. For a hero of Selone and an explorer of Beyond, her body was petite. Perhaps it was a trait of the elves, but her chest and butt were certainly voluptuous. However, she still had a small

frame. Her shoulders were narrow, and her limbs were pitifully thin.

I felt like I was watching a withering flower. I couldn't just let her be.

“Ectradion. If... If there are corpses you can be satisfied with, will you continue exploring?”

“Do I have to enter your guild?”

“I'll back down for now. After all, I can't bother you with my world's problem. Once I push back the danger my world's currently facing, I'll ask you again.”

At my words, Loretta burst into laughter.

“Shin-nim, what are you talking about!? Shin-nim is talking like Shin-nim is going to defeat other worlds' enemies!”

“What are you talking about, Loretta?”

I tilted my head and answered.

“Once I defeat the two enemies my world is facing, do you think I'll have anything to be afraid of? In that case, why wouldn't I go defeat other worlds' enemies?”

“Shin-nim, you really...”

As my words were too reasonable, Loretta became speechless. Then, I heard the sound of a blanket falling. I turned my head toward the direction of the sound. Daisy Ectradion, who put her blanket aside, was standing up and looking at me. Her Evil Eyes were shining with an exceptional red light.

“The corpses... Let me see them.”

Good! That’s what I wanted to see! With a grin, I answered.

“First, wear a skirt.”

Translator’s note:

The popularity contest will be ongoing until the end of this week!

Chapter 175. What Is Not Allowed For Her (6)

I was kicked out of the room. Realizing that Daisy Ectradion would take forever to put on her clothes by herself, Loretta chased me out so that she could help her. I was already talking to Ectradion when she didn't have anything on, so was there really a need to kick me out? I felt wronged. ...Have I been too hungry for affection lately? No, I've been hungry since I was born!

Then, the door opened.

“Shin-nim, let's go now!”

“Mm... I'm calm now.”

The two of them came out. Seeing Ectradion, I became lost for words. Just one minute ago, she was only wearing a white dress shirt and black lace panties.

But now, she was wearing a grey blazer with gold buttons, and a black leather mini-skirt that revealed her thighs. On her head was a sharp grey beret, and she was wearing black high-heeled shoes. Finally, black stockings wrapped around her delicate legs put the finishing touch. Not even an experienced army private would be able to change so fast into his uniform.

“How did you change so fast...? Not to mention, the uniform is very... Earth-esque.”

“Several worlds share similar cultures and styles, Shin-nim. Think about all the weapons you’ve seen.”

“My battle uniform. With my enchant skill, my equipment, I can put in. Huhu.”

Ectradion was bragging about something I didn’t even ask about!

“T-Then let’s go, Loretta, Ectradion. I have a lot of corpses, but the best one is in my guild house.”

“Call me Daisy. My last name is too long.”

“Then, Daisy-ssi. You can call me Shin.”

“I don’t like being formal. It’s too long. Unnecessarily.”

“O-Okay, then I’ll just call you Daisy.”

“Un.”

Although Daisy yawned and followed us nonchalantly, I took it to mean that we had gotten closer. Loretta also smiled and whispered to me.

“Shin-nim, you’ve gotten skilled at tricking people.”

“Tricking? What do you mean?”

“Saving other worlds. You said it to gain her favor, right?”

“... Huh?”

“... Eh?”

There was a slight miscommunication with Loretta, but we returned to the guild house without much problem. When we arrived, however, we saw father and Walker drinking alcohol under a parasol.

“Father, you drink with Walker?”

“There’s someone to drink with, so why wouldn’t I? You want to join?”

“Don’t try to gloss over this matter, Kang Shin. Who are the girls behind you?”

Walker pointed at Loretta and Daisy with his glass of alcohol in his hand. I turned around to introduce them to each other. While Loretta had her hands together modestly, Daisy quickly ran to the boar and drake corpses decorating the garden. The two of them had gotten compressed so much that the boar was now the size of a small car, while the drake was also only about 7 meters.

“Amazing... Such perfect refinement. The master who did this, introduce me.”

“You’re looking at him.”

“You have such profound knowledge over corpses?”

“No.”

Meanwhile, Loretta was bowing to father respectfully.

“It’s nice to finally meet you, Father. I’m Loretta. I got to know Shin-nim in the dungeon. Though I’m still inexperienced, I’m supporting Shin-nim in climbing the dungeon. I’m not too keen on Korean etiquette and may make many mistakes, but please guide me.”

“Thank you for the polite greeting, Daughter. So Son, when can I see my grandkids?”

“Not any time soon! Loretta, why are you making him misunderstand?”

“Misunderstand!? He’s my future father-in-law!”

Loretta declared without batting an eye. Father laughed wholeheartedly, while Walker snickered with his eyes open.

“I thought this one was the real one, but I guessed wrong, hehe. If Mastiford sees this, she’s going to get angry. To think you hid a woman from your wife. You’re quite good.”

“I don’t have a wife, Walker!”

“Hu, I’m surprised you can say that when you have such a big daughter.”

“Shin-nim, can I hear about this in more detail? So you really had a partner. Geez, I don’t like it when you hide things like this, uhuhu.”

“I’m scared the most when you laugh like that, Loretta...”

Really, Heaven was helping me by not letting Hwaya be here. Back then, she ignored what I was trying to say, but she must have realized I had someone in my mind. If she knew that was Loretta... Kuk. Just thinking about it made my head hurt. In terms of personality, I knew Hwaya wouldn’t lose to anyone.

I called Daisy.

“So? Can you use them?”

“They’re both... perfect. The boar surpassed its limit. When it becomes an undead... it might continue to grow. It’s the same for

the Flame Drake. Here, the corpses weren't... being stored. They were... evolving."

Daisy clasped her hands together and murmured in a dazed voice. Although her slow speech made it hard to understand what she was saying, I could tell that she liked the corpses.

"But... two isn't enough."

She drooped her shoulders. So she could show such reaction in front of corpses... Thinking rather stupid thoughts, I began to put corpses down onto the garden one by one. When I began taking out the corpses I gained from the SS rank dungeon, Insect World, Daisy's red eyes shone ominously.

"Giant... insects. Insect undead... Cool."

"Setting aside the fact that you're a necromancer, do you just like undead?"

"This rhinoceros beetle is... perfection."

She was already in pure ecstasy from looking at all the insect corpses. She wasn't paying attention to me in the slightest. I made a wry smile. Then, curious about father and Walker's reaction, I looked back at them.

Loretta was pouring alcohol into father's glass.

“How is it?”

“You can have Shin now. Take him!”

“Thank you, Father! I will serve him well!”

“Don’t give me away on your own, Father! Loretta too, don’t take his words seriously.”

“Tsk, what a boring son.”

“I agree, Father. Ah, but Shin-nim has many good points as well!”

They were getting along extremely well. I thought Hwaya and Father were a good pair, but it seemed Loretta was even better. I guess she didn’t live 2,700 yea... 17 years for nothing. I didn’t change what I was thinking because I felt a vast killing intent. Not at all!

Father finally stopped cracking jokes with Loretta and looked at Daisy. She was still buried inside the pile of corpses being elated.

“Who’s she?”

“A Beyond explorer. It’s hard to explain, but I want to sell her our corpses. Though it isn’t now, she’ll eventually join us.”

“Do you really need to get our permission, Kang Shin? What’s in your inventory is yours. Even if they aren’t, as long as you explain properly, no one will mind it. Though, I’m sure many of them will be unhappy that you’re selling them to such a beautiful woman.”

Walker added useless remarks as he snickered. It seemed he became laxer when he drank.

In any case, Father seemed to agree.

“That’s better than letting the corpses rot in your inventory. You weren’t planning on selling them for money anyways.”

“I saved them in case we needed them.”

“Wanting to help others is always admirable, Son. That’s especially true if the person you’re trying to help wishes to walk on her two feet. Do as you want.”

“When someone owes a debt of gratitude, they’ll feel pressured to pay it back more than it’s worth. Yup.”

Most people would take things for granted and ask for even greater favors. Only a few would do as Walker said.

Daisy faced me. Her eyes sparkled.

“It’s possible... with these. Thanks.”

“Glad to be of help. Just know that they won’t be cheap.”

“Of course. But, there’s something I want to ask.”

She looked at me in the eyes.

“If I help you, your world... Will you save... my world?”

I widened my eyes. Although I wanted her help and was ready to accept it wholeheartedly, I didn’t expect her to make the offer. Did this mean she trusted me? I collected my thoughts and answered.

“... I was expecting you to pay me later.”

“I have eyes for people.”

Her eyes flashed. She was undoubtedly talking about her Evil Eyes. Indeed, there were no ‘eyes’ like them. I nodded.

“Of course, if you help save Earth.”

“Then, good.”

Daisy also nodded and answered.

“Guild Revival. I’ll join.”

The 10th member of Revival was thus born.

[Guild ‘Revival’ became B rank! When challenging Event Dungeons or Event Raids, when 5 or more guild members are present, all guild members’ abilities will be increased by 10%!]

“How strong are you that the guild ranked up just by you joining?”

“First guild. Not sure.”

Even as she answered, she was busily walking around the mountain of corpses in the garden. Then, she stopped in front of one and seemed to fall into thought. Soon, she crushed it. It then transformed into mana and spread to all the other corpses. It seemed it was a corpses reinforcement technique for necromancers.

Just like that, she crushed a few additional corpses in poor conditions and made the other corpses abundant with mana. She hummed and made a satisfied expression. She then put her hand on the skirt’s chain belt and pulled on it.

“Uwoah, what are you doing!?”

“This, my weapon. Strong and cool.”

Daisy bragged needlessly. She was holding her belt... no, whip. Her skirt didn't fall. The whip wasn't actually tightening her skirt like a belt. While I let out a sigh of relief, Loretta grinned.

“Disappointed, Shin-nim?”

“You can ask after you put down those fingers you're pointing at my eyes.”

“This, and this.”

While Loretta and I were glaring at each other, Daisy continued to work. Every time she swung her chain whip, the monster corpses filling up the garden began to twitch. It was a truly horrifying sight. Even so, it mysteriously drew people's attention. Daisy's mana continued to spread across the garden, and in the end, captured all the corpses perfectly.

The corpses... rather, the undead were lining up in front of her. We all watched her in awe.

“If they all attacked together, it'd be difficult to deal with them.”

“Necromancers are... amazing...”

“Really... Not to mention, such a beautiful girl is commanding

this army of corpses.”

“Is it an enemy? Do I kill her?”

“Uuu, there are two new beauties.”

“I can’t see! Daddy, hold me up!”

As Ina was fretting, I held her up to let her see more easily. But Ina, you can fly... Eh?

“When did you come!?”

“Just now. Walker sent us a report. So? Can I get an explanation, Ina’s Daddy?”

“Can you not address me in ways that would cause misunderstandings!?”

“... Oh?”

The horn was sounding for war! Not against the army of corpses, but it was here and now!

Chapter 176. What Is Not Allowed For Her (7)

Hwaya stood on Ludia's side for once and glared at Loretta. It was because Loretta was standing right next to me. Ye-Eun was still in a panic, while Daisy was busy with moving the corpses and didn't care about what was happening here.

“Shin, who's that woman?”

“She's Loretta, the Floor Shop shopkeeper and a guild master of one of First Dungeon's administrative guilds.”

“Hello, my name is Loretta. You're members of Shin-nim's guild, right? It's nice to meet you all.”

“Administrative guild master...? She's not an explorer?”

The girls looked flustered. Hwaya then said with a more relaxed voice.

“I misunderstood. It looks like my intuition's not working well.”

“I'm also Shin-nim's future wife!”

“I knew it!”

“An enemy...!”

At Loretta’s bold statement, Hwaya and Ludia immediately entered battle mode! Loretta most likely said that to keep them in check, but it seemed Hwaya and Ludia took it as a provocation. Balls of flame appeared in mid-air and the garden’s ground began to crack. I was afraid they would really turn this mansion into a battlefield if left alone, so I stopped them with a sigh.

“Loretta, don’t spread lies. You guys too, stop using your power for useless things.”

“Lies? Really?”

“It’s not useless. It’s justice.”

“D-Don’t be angry, Shin-nim. I’m sorry.”

Loretta was eventually going to meet the others, and I knew Hwaya and Ludia would react this way. But if they really fought, it would only end with Hwaya and Ludia getting punished by the administrative guilds. Regardless, since Loretta was the one who provoked them, I warned her.

“Loretta, I’m sure you were kidding, but don’t cause trouble. Got it?”

“B-But I wasn’t kidding... I was being honest... Shin-nim got mad at me. Shin-nim...”

Loretta drooped her ears and sulked. It seemed she was shocked quite a bit as her eyes were slightly teary. I wanted to hug her, but I wasn't done talking. I turned to face Hwaya and Ludia.

“Hwaya, Ludia, Loretta isn't an enemy. She's a benefactor who helped me for a long time. You guys are being rude to her. She didn't do anything wrong, she was just kidding. Plus, I should be the one angry at her joke, not you.”

“Shin, I told you how I felt about you. It's normal for me to get angry.”

“M-Me too! I'll be troubled if you go to someone else!”

“Let me say this clearly.”

I breathed in and breathed out. Then, I continued.

“Until I solve the danger Earth is facing, I won't date anyone.”

The atmosphere chilled, but I didn't stop.

“I think I said before too, but I don't have the time for it. I'm already busy breaking through the dungeon and fighting Earth's monsters, so how am I going to find the time to have a relationship? Even if I had the time, I wouldn't have the peace of mind to do so. Even now, I'm confused because of all of you.

You're all charming and out of my league, but you all said you like me! I can't just choose one of you like choosing a college course! I have to think about it over and over again, but I don't have the time for that right now! Even if I have to miss this golden chance that might never come again in my lifetime and have you all come to not like me. Even if I have to remain single for the rest of my life! I still can't make a decision! Romantic relationships aren't allowed for me right now! Understood?"

"Puhahahahaha! So my son can say that!"

"G-Gol, Golden chance, kukukuk!"

"... Un."

Father and Walker burst into laughter, while Hwaya nodded and the others drooped their heads. Hwaya's cheeks were flushed.

"That was a pretty good effort. I can't say that I'm happy that you can't decide on me, but I'll let it slide."

"You sure are confident."

"Of course, I'm the best woman in the world. But, since she isn't from our world, I'll still leave some space for deliberation."

"I like Shin too... I was the first to confess too... I hate unni."

“But remember, I won’t let you go until you fall for me. I told you last time, right? What’s important is that I like you, so be prepared. Ina, let’s go back.”

“Okay, Mommy.”

“Ah, unni, me too.”

Hwaya took her flame back. Then, with a slightly uneasy expression, she took Ina from me and went into the mansion. Sumire looked at me for a moment, then ran after Hwaya.

While Hwaya’s words were weighing down my head, Loretta flapped her ears and shouted.

“I, I’m used to waiting too!”

“You say that, but you take out your axe whenever I talk about other women.”

“T-That’s... Sorry. I know I shouldn’t, but I get worried about thieving cats... I apologize for today. I’ll go back and reflect on it, so come console me kindly later.”

“I don’t think if you can say you’re reflecting when you’re asking me to come console you...”

“I’ll see you later then, Father.”

After politely saying goodbye to Father, Loretta disappeared from Marianne's Garden. Hwaya and Loretta. The two storms had passed by safely, and I couldn't help but sigh in relief.

Daisy then approached me. She seemed unfazed by everything that just happened. She simply had a jubilant expression that showed just how elated she was about getting new corpses.

"I used my skills. First time in a long time. I'm hungry."

"Daisy, why are you asking me tha... Eh? What happened to all the corpses?"

"Inventory. Do you want payment?"

"Later. For now, let's go in the mansion. I have to properly introduce you to everyone. After that... I'll let you eat an amazing tuna sashimi."

After hearing the phrase 'tuna sashimi,' Father and Walker slowly got up and walked into the mansion. When I was about to invite the others in, I noticed that Ludia was nowhere to be seen.

"Ye-Eun, where's Ludia?"

"She took Shuna and went to the dungeon. She looked like she was extremely troubled. I'm worried..."

“... I’ll message her later. Let’s go in for now.”

What I said might have shocked Ludia. She was relying on me, but what I said today was no different than saying that the status quo would change. Perhaps, she might have imagined a future without me.

Huu... It really was complicated.

“Um, Shin.”

“Hm?”

Before I noticed, Ye-Eun had approached me. Her eyes trembled apprehensively.

“Can it not be... me? Am I not charming at all to Shin?”

“Of course not. Don’t be absurd.”

“But, I’m just a normal girl...”

“What normal? You’re extremely charming and unique. You don’t lose to anyone.”

Especially when you’re fighting monsters. Because I didn’t add

the last part, Ye-Eun seemed to be feeling much better.

“Hehe, thanks. I really like you.”

“Yeah, yeah, I like you too.”

“Then is today our day 1!?”

“My answer is the same as last time.”

“Tsk.”

“Alright, let’s go in. I’m sure everyone’s waiting. I don’t want to see Father’s personality when he’s hungry.”

“Un.”

“Blood sugar... low. Can’t, move.”

While joking with Ye-Eun, I dragged Daisy, who had gotten extremely sluggish after playing with the corpses, inside the mansion. This time, we managed to finish a fourth of the melting tuna that I had left.

Around dinner time, I left the guild house. Although it was good to spend time with my guildmates, it was more important to quickly finish grinding the Twin-headed Ogre. If I dawdled too

long and a day passed by, I would have wasted a day. I reluctantly refused father who asked if I wanted another drink and headed to the dungeon.

Since Walker was there, I figured he wouldn't be lonely. Though they weren't that close, in the beginning, they had gotten much closer after drinking together. I wanted Walker to participate in the guild's activities out of his own volition, not because of the contract. In order to do so, it was best that he got closer to the guild members.

Walker wasn't a saint, but he wasn't evil either. He was over thirty, but talking to him, I realized just how caged he had lived his whole life. More specifically, he was very biased toward one side of things. His thoughts were dark, sometimes overly down-to-earth, and sometimes cold-hearted. Since he must have had to deal with Brightman's shady actions, it was understandable.

However, that didn't mean he had to continue that way forever. That wasn't the proper and normal way of living. Though, I couldn't say that our current lives were normal either.

Being bound to us through the contract and having to work with us, it seemed he was changing one step at a time. I could tell that he was opening up to the people in the guild. He was even joking with me when I had severely beaten him up and forced him to sign a contract.

I was certain that a day would come where the contract would become unnecessary. I wanted that day to come.

*

I had an idea of what kind of elixir the Twin-headed Ogre would drop. When I ground the Giant Wolf on the 45th floor, it dropped tattoo invigoration elixirs. When I was talking with Ren, he casually remarked that he was grinding invigoration elixirs on the 55 floor. As such, I was more or less certain.

[Choose your reward.]

[1. Ogre's Tattoo Invigoration Elixir

2. Twin-headed Ogre's Leather Belt]

To my eyes, the words 'Ogre's Tattoo Invigoration Elixir' looked like the words of God. Without hesitating, I chose the tattoo invigoration elixir and threw it in my mouth. Instantly, the tattoo on my arms glowed. If this elixir had the same function as the one for the wolf tattoo...

[Your Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo becomes more invigorated. Your strength increases by 0.5% and constitution increases by 1. As you have the Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo, your strength increases by an additional 0.5% and your constitution by an additional 1.]

As I thought, there was an additional bonus! I flexed my arms contently and thrust my spear into the air a couple times. No other explorer had the Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo. I was the only one

who had it.

When the normal Ogre's Tattoo was invigorated to its limit, it would raise its possessor's strength by 15%. However, that would only be half of the strength increase I would enjoy.

'First'! It was truly a sweet word! The 55th floor was the best!

"Alright, then let's continue this momentum and go again!"

[Yes, Master! If it's only this, I can go 100 times without feeling tired!]

"I wish I could..."

The dungeon's mana, the effect of other explorers, and whatnot, it seemed the dungeon's system wasn't so simple. Although this ten-time battle ticket looked like a simple piece of paper, it contained an extremely complicated arrangement of vast mana that I could not even begin to fathom. Plus, it was undoubtedly made of special material as well. I was certain that the price I bought them from was a bargain.

With such a thought, I left the Floor Master room. When Loretta saw me from the Floor Shop, she flapped her ears with a blooming smile. Then, her ears drooped. It seemed she remembered me scolding her.

"You came, Shin-nim?"

“Yeah, I’m going to go back for another round though.”

Although I didn’t mean to answer curtly, Loretta shrunk back slightly and asked carefully.

“Are you... still mad?”

“No, I wasn’t mad, to begin with. It was just that I didn’t like how you lied to provoke the others.”

With that, Loretta would probably not joke like that again. When I glanced at Loretta with that thought, Loretta was tearing up. No, she was crying!

“... Hic, hic, I’m sowwy. Hic. I didn’t you’d hate it so much.”

“Loretta!?”

“I, I won’t do it again, I won’t joke again, so don’t hate me, hic. I’m sowwy, I’m sowwy...!”

“No, no, I don’t hate you at all. I don’t hate you, so crying!”

I had to stay for 30 minutes to console Loretta who started crying. How can a woman who’s lived over 2000 years cry like a teenage girl!? It’s too cute!

Chapter 177. The Power Of The Hero (1)

Fighting the Twin-headed Ogre ten times a day was honestly just too easy. Now that I thought about it, fighting the Floor Master three times a day had been nothing at all. It didn't even take 20 minutes to kill the Twin-headed Ogre, so fighting it three times would only take an hour. As I was now, I would be fine even if I continuously fought for 10 hours.

Plus, even though the Twin-headed Ogre was strong and fast, it was a normal ground-based monster that couldn't even use magic. After I fought it a couple of times, I had memorized its movement and attack patterns and became able to defeat it in 10 minutes.

I had an incredibly high strength stat, which was even further amplified by Zeus' power and Ogre's tattoo. I also had Mad Typhoon, which showed greater strength than what was possible with my stats. Although it would be hard for me to block a Demon Army Commander's regenerative ability like Peruta did, it was still extremely easy for me to deal a blow that surpassed a mere ogre's regenerative ability. It was what greatly helped to shorten the time I spent fighting the Twin-headed Ogre.

After I left the Floor Master room, I was drinking a Fatigue Recovery Juice worth 100 gold when Loretta spoke with a dumbfounded expression.

“Shin-nim, you should know that there are explorers who go in as full 10-man parties and fight the Twin-headed Ogre for 3 hours. If someone saw you, they'd think the dungeon was made to be climbed alone.”

“There’s no reason for me to care about them. I only have to care about people stronger than me. I don’t have the time to turn back and feel proud seeing people weaker than me.”

Loretta slightly sulked at my cut-throat response.

“If Shin-nim ever collapses from working too hard, know that Shin-nim’s precious things will be missing when Shin-nim wakes up.”

“I won’t collapse in front of Loretta so don’t worry.”

I retorted with a grin, and Loretta made a scared expression. She looked like she was about to cry.

“A-Are you still angry?”

“No, that’s not it. It’s just that guys like to... Uh, no, nevermind.”

“What is it!? That sounds like some extremely valuable information! Please continue, now!”

“Never. Not even over my dead body.”

“Why!?”

I had no plans to say anything. I finally got her to stop, because if I had said anything, she would've gone on about the "marrying" thing. I stuck my tongue out at Loretta and headed toward the Floor Master room again. But from the happy expression I saw before I turned around, it seemed Loretta was making her own assumptions and being happy.

Perhaps in her head, she had already planned out our wedding. However, my prediction was immediately proven to be wrong. Loretta's thoughts were leaking.

"Ehehe, then we'll name our seventh kid this... I'm sure he'll be just as cute as Shin-nim, uhuhuhu."

Amazed at Loretta's ability to surpass my expectations every time, I shook my head. Then, I opened the door to the Floor Master room.

"Fight me! Twin-headed Ogre!"

Like I said before, it didn't take long for me to defeat the Twin-headed Ogre. I defeated it four times in one hour. In other words, after two and a half hours, I had nothing more to do for the day. Including the time for rest, four hours was more than enough.

Since I had to grind the boss 80 to 100 times on average, I would be forced to a leisurely lifestyle for a while. Although I grew impatient thinking about the 2 year time period I had, since I knew being impatient wouldn't change anything, I thought about how to spend the time more efficiently.

First, I decided to talk to Yua, who was still sulking.

“Hmph!”

However, I failed at every attempt to appease her. I spent the remaining time sparring with Father or teaching Sumire spearmanship.

With the exception of Walker, who had to guard Yua for about a third of his day since school had just restarted, when they weren’t climbing the dungeon, most Revival members were socializing in the guild house. This made it extremely convenient for me to see and teach Sumire.

“Haa!”

With a shield on one hand and a spear on the other, Sumire charged toward me. Although she was attacking and defending rather sensibly, I still skillfully dodged her attack and lightly attacked her shin which her shield wasn’t covering.

“Your lower body’s guard is lacking!”

“Kuk, guide me more, Shin-nim!”

“Anytime!”

The moment I responded, Sumire clenched her teeth and thrust her spear toward me. Her basic battle tactic was to defend with her shield and attack with her spear. It was appropriate if she wanted to act as a tank who drew the enemies' aggro while also acting as a damage dealer.

“The tip of your spear is shaking because you're too focused on your shield!”

“Kuk! I'll fix it!”

I did my best to point out her mistakes and to help her hone her spear. When I attacked Sumire's opening, she would be hit, but by the time she got back up, the opening was gone. Seeing her grow, I couldn't help but be excited as a teacher. As a result, I ended up overdoing it slightly, but Sumire happily accepted it. Perhaps this was how Father felt when he was teaching me. Regardless, I was happy that my guild was full of such talented people.

After we sparred for two hours, Sumire bowed, drenched in sweat.

“Thank you for your lesson, Shin-nim! My Spear Technique reached mid-rank level 5!”

“You're progressing well. You'll be able to use it in real battles soon.”

“Although I'm lacking, it's thanks to Shin-nim's enthusiastic

teaching that I'm improving so much! I'm extremely happy to serve Shin-nim as my master!"

"No, you're doing well. You have talent and you're putting in an effort. I'm happy to have Sumire as my first disciple too."

"Shin-nim...!"

No, don't look at me with those sparkling eyes of respect! It's ticklish! I scratched my head.

"Alright, let's go wash ourselves off and eat something."

"Yes, Shin-nim! I'll prepare the food!"

When I went upstairs after a refreshing shower, I unexpectedly saw Daisy there. Although there wasn't anyone to prepare food, Daisy was sitting alone at the table with her head down. She was in her uniform, but her beret was on the side, while her chain whip was wrapped around her arm like an accessory. I was surprised that the whip could be worn in so many ways.

She must have felt my presence as she turned toward me. Her head was still drooped on the table. She flashed her red eyes ominously and spoke.

"Blood sugar... low. Need food."

She said it in a cool way, but the content was anything but cool. It even made her outer appearance look worse.

“Where were you until now...? Well, that aside, just what did you eat for the past 73 years?”

“Preserved food... in inventory. Tasteless. I ate here, threw away all preserved food. My stomach wants tasty food.”

“Oh hey, that last sentence was grammatically correct! ... You’ll have to wait a bit for the food. Eat this for now.”

I took out a chocolate bar from my inventory and gave it to her. Daisy’s eye’s flashed and she grabbed it. After peeling the wrapper, she took a big bite.

[Yummy!]

“You don’t need to use your Evil Eyes to tell everyone around you.”

Wait, wasn’t this the first time she shouted something!? She wasted such an important scene on a chocolate bar!? I wanted her to shout in a more emotional event... I felt slightly betrayed. Then, seeing Daisy put her hands out like asking for another, I flicked her forehead.

“We’re going to have a proper meal soon. You know Sumire, right? She’s a genius in various ways, but she’s especially talented

in housework. You can look forward to her food.”

“Mmm... For yummy food, I can... wait.”

“Good.”

Daisy took her hands back and nibbled on the chocolate bar she had left. Although it was good that she had calmed down, I still didn't know why she was here.

If I remembered correctly, after eating the melting tuna, she disappeared and was nowhere to be seen. Four days had passed since then, so that meant she had come back after four days.

Just when I was about to ask, Daisy opened her mouth as if she just remembered.

“Beyond... 12th floor. Broke through, thanks to you.”

“Ah...!”

So she went straight into Beyond that day! It was a rather quick decision, contrary to the slow and lax attitude she was showing now. I nodded my head with admiration.

“That was quick. Good job.”

“Your children, very strong. Pookie, Iana, Loro, especially strong.”

“What’s up with those cute names... I don’t know which monsters you’re talking about.”

“Flame... Drake and, Iron... Boar, Evil Rhinoceros. Beetle Lord.”

“Good job shortening their names to such cute ones!”

“Fighting together, I’m happy...”

Seeing her elated expression, I lost the heart to say anything. I simply made a sour smile and patted her head. Then, remembering that I patted her without thinking, I pulled my hand back. However, Daisy didn’t seem to mind. In fact, she looked at me curiously when I took my hand off.

“I don’t, mind. Continue.”

“No, sorry. That was rude of me.”

“You’re okay.”

She was really friendly. Was it because I was another Beyond explorer? No, that’s probably not it... Just when I was thinking about the reason, Daisy spoke out.

“You, surrounded by, pretty girls. Clearly showing feelings, but you’re virgin. With you, I feel safe.”

“You’re dissing me, right!? You’re openly dissing me! Wait, so you were actually listening to us properly!?”

I felt like I had my back stabbed thoroughly. I was so sad that I wanted to cry.

“Reliable. More than other girls, feel safer.”

“Don’t let your guard down, I’m a man too! Plus, other girls? What girls are threatening your chastity!?”

“World is... wide.”

“Don’t make that distant expression! You’re scaring me!”

I unwillingly came to find out that pretty girls were sought after by both men and women. I really did not need to know that at all...

In any case, Sumire, Daisy, and I, a rather unusual combination, enjoyed a lunch together. Then, when I was about to start my training after getting some rest, I got a message that broke the peaceful atmosphere. It was from Walker, who was protecting Yua on her way back from school.

[Come back to Earth now, Kang Shin! Your sister got done in by

Luca Bruno's ability! I'm running back with her in my arms, but...
In any case, come now!]

"I'm coming immediately!"

People that got on my nerves even by doing nothing seemed to have gotten tired of living, as they pulled on my hair and opened the gate to Hell.

Author's note:

You've waited a long time! It's time to go take care of the people making you itchy just by existing! Walker, you were put on this duty for this very moment! Well... Good job Walker! You stopped the reader's rage!

Chapter 178. The Power Of The Hero (2)

I immediately came back to Earth. I knew where Yua was. I rushed to her in my armor.

“Sharana!”

[Yes, Master!]

After infusing Sharana into my body, I even used Talaria. Then, I used Divine Speed and was able to reach Walker in just 1 minute 13 seconds.

In an area strangely silent and deserted, insect type monsters were flying toward Walker. It was undoubtedly Luca Bruno’s doing. In Walker’s arms, I could see Yua struggling to free herself.

“Let me go! Let me go now!”

“Kuk, calm down, Kang Yua! Your oppa is here!”

“Ah, Oppa! Oppa, say something to him! I have to go meet someone now!”

First, I used Peika’s ability to scorch the surrounding monsters, then calmly received Yua from Walker. I could see something condensed in her eyes. Her cheeks were flushed red and her eyes were out of focus. It was the typical charmed status.

“Let me go, Oppa! I would be troubled if I can’t meet him!”

“Yua, calm down first.”

“I hate Oppa! You don’t even know how I feel! ...Eh?”

Yua’s expression distorted as if she was agonizing over something.

“I, I... Oppa... but that person... uuu...”

She was in conflict because of me even while she was charmed? Touched, I wanted to hug her and rub my cheek against hers but now wasn’t the time. I took a deep breath and shouted.

“Yua, snap out of it!”

[You used Orc Lord’s Warcry! All party members are cleansed of negative status effects. All party members’ attack power increases by 50 percent for the duration. All party members become super-armored, unfazed by enemy attacks.]

In an instant, Yua’s eyes became focused again.

“... Eh?”

She looked extremely confused. She touched her cheeks, knocked on her head a few times, then realizing that she was in my embrace, she blushed.

“Oppa, what’s going on...?”

“Sorry, Yua. I dragged you into my problem.”

“N-No, I’m fine. Did I trouble Oppa? I-It’s bad if I did...”

“You didn’t, so don’t worry. Are you okay, now?”

“Y-Yes. It was really strange. I suddenly really liked someone I saw for the first time to the point I couldn’t control myself... It was too strange. Then, Walker ajusshi grabbed me and... If it wasn’t for him...”

I put Yua down and dusted her off a couple times. Then, I bowed to Walker.

“Walker, thanks.”

“I just did what you told me to do. I’m just doing my job.”

“Still, it’s thanks to you that Yua is safe. Thank you, really. I won’t forget this debt even if I die.”

“... Hmph, as long as you know.”

“Sorry, but can you continue protecting Yua right now? I have something to do.”

“... Interesting. Of course, I’ll protect your sister wholeheartedly. Go wild.”

I patted Yua’s head one more time, then opened my visor to reveal my eyes. Then, I stared at the insects that were still flying toward me. After meeting my eyes, the insects all turned to stone and fell to the ground. Countless thuds rang out as if there was a hail.

“You’re no human...!”

“This is Oppa’s...!”

The insects turned to stone the moment they got in my range. Unless there was a healer who possessed mana that surpassed mine, it would be impossible to cancel my ability. Hundreds, then thousands of rock sculptures piled up around us. Then, I lightly waved my hand, creating a tornado with Mad Typhoon. With Sharana’s power amplifying the tornado, I shredded the sculptures into tiny pieces.

In just a moment, all the monsters disappeared. I made a light sigh and pulled my visor back down. I then turned around to Yua

and Walker and spoke.

“Then I’ll be off.”

“Oppa, can I go with you? I want to see Oppa teaching him a lesson! I can’t forgive myself for being unable to choose between Oppa and that person!”

It seemed Yua wanted a closure for herself as well. I looked at Walker. He shrugged and remarked.

“I was also vexed because I could only run away. I want to see how he’ll react when he sees you.”

“Alright, then let’s go together. Peika, materialize!”

[I’ve been waiting!]

Peika materialized in mid-air as a dragon. When I put Yua and Walker on her back, Yua cheered.

“How beautiful... Oppa is amazing! Do all dungeon explorers have something like this?”

“Sorry to break your fantasy, but it’s your Oppa that’s special.”

I put a Mana Potion in my mouth and ordered Peika to fly. Peika

soared into the air, and civilians who saw her from the streets screamed.

“Kang Shin, your sister’s face isn’t hidden.”

“It’s fine. They already found out anyways. We’ll be more open from now on. I don’t plan on hiding anymore. There’s no reason to either.”

I doubt Luca Bruno came all the way to Korea, saw Yua for the first time, and charmed her because he was mesmerized by her. He undoubtedly approached her knowing that she was my sister. In that case, there was no longer a need to hide my identity. There was only one thing I needed to do.

That was to show what would happen if they bothered me.

“Peika, full speed. Follow Luca Bruno’s mana.”

[Got it!]

Peika shot forward like lightning. He wasn’t far from here. He had even used some ability to prevent people from approaching her. He must have thought that Walker was stronger than him in a direct fight and planned on chasing him away before he acquired Yua.

Acquire Yua and... acquire... Ha... Hahaha...

“Found you.”

Peika shot down like an arrow. The people around us screamed and scattered. Meanwhile, I grabbed a man who was running away like the others by the nape of his neck. He looked at me with a flustered expression. As expected, he had disguised himself rather thoroughly. However, he couldn't hide his mana.

“It's been a while, Luca Bruno.”

“What are you two doing!? I'm not such a per...!”

I threw him on the ground face down. Immediately, tiny monsters that were stuck on his body flooded toward me to counterattack then became petrified and fell. I grabbed his face and jumped down Peika's back. People gathered around us, murmuring.

“What's happening?”

“A dragon? Is that a dragon?”

“Wait, isn't that Dragon Knight?”

“The dragon he's riding changed! It must be an Asian version!”

“I'm just an American touring Kore... Kuk!”

Grabbing his face, on one hand, I poured mana in my foot and kicked him in the face. The mana barrier he had instantly shattered and a few of his teeth flew into the air. The bystanders screamed.

“Dragon Knight is beating up an innocent man!”

“Call the police!”

“Call them for what?”

A second, third, fourth... I wasn't satisfied with just his face. I threw him down on the ground, raised my foot and slammed it down on his back.

“Kahak!”

“Luca Bruno, this will be my only question, so answer.”

I asked.

“Who told you about my sister?”

“Why are you doing this... to me... Kak!”

Was he still trying to hide his identity? I smirked and brought my

spear out. Then, I cut off both of his arms. Yua screamed, but I had no plans to go easy because she was watching. I scorched his severed arms using Peika's power and swung my spear again to fling the blood off. Next, I placed my spear on his back and said firmly.

“Next is your heart.”

“B-Brightman! It was Brightman! Not just you, but he has the information on everyone in Revival! An organization he is forming without Guardian knowing is... Kuhuk!”

I smacked his back with my spear shaft. Then, I asked again.

“You sure it wasn't Guardian's doing?”

“Y-Yes!”

“Organization name, members, tell me everything.”

“N-Now? C-Can you heal me first...? M-My arms...!”

I raised my spear. Just when I was about to strike down with it, Luca Bruno shouted desperately.

“I'll say it! I'll say it now!”

“Walker, sorry, but can you take out a note?”

“... Sure.”

Walker gnawed on his lips and took out a notepad. While he took down each and every word Luca Bruno was spewing out, he asked.

“Xin who...?”

“Xin Shaomei!”

It was China’s SS ranker. It seemed I’d need to see her face too. The question was whether she would still have her face afterward.

After Luca Bruno finished saying everything, I took my spear back. When I looked around, I saw several police cars around us. An officer who seemed to have a high rank shouted on a megaphone.

“We’re the police!”

“Go back.”

I put mana into my words. The police blocking the road were pushed back by the mana’s pressure. It was the same for the people around us. Although there might have been a better way to go about it, I didn’t want to be bothered by anyone right now.

At the same time, I opened the guild communication channel.

[All members of Revival on Earth, confirm your family's safety. If something seems off, notify me immediately. I will take care of it within 5 minutes.]

[Don't worry, Shin. I have Guardian members and familiars protecting everyone's families. It's mainly you and I that's being targeted.]

Hwaya immediately responded. I didn't think other members' information would have had their information exposed as well. Brightman, just how much money did you use!? I gritted my teeth.

In any case, I felt grateful to Hwaya for taking care of something I had forgotten about.

[Hwaya, thanks. I only thought about my own family... Damn, I didn't think other members would be targeted at all. It would have been obvious if I thought about it for a moment!]

[It's fine, it's my job to take care of things you don't have the time to do... So? That got me many points, right? Did you fall for me yet?]

[Yeah, I did... Is your mother okay?]

[... U-Un, she's fine. Walker messaged everyone as he took Yua. I took care of it before it was too late.]

In the middle of talking to Hwaya, I raised my spear and struck down on the ground once. Ability users that popped out amidst the police force and Luca Bruno who was trying to join them all froze.

[Everyone, stay with your family. I'm going to go take care of an organization called 'Heroes of Shadow.' I'll take you when everything's over.]

[Shin, I want to go too.]

[M-Me too!]

[No, it's fine. You don't have to come with me.]

Sorry, but having you there won't help me. For now, you guys should focus on increasing your ability through the dungeon.

I swung my spear and shot out a whirlpool, shredding the ability users limbs and Luca Bruno's leg.

“Kuaaaaak!”

“If there's anyone else you brought with you, tell them to come out now. I'll take care of all of you together.”

[... Want help?]

A sluggish voice rang out. It wasn't from the guild communication channel but from the private messaging system.

[Daisy?]

[Insect extermination must be done... cleanly, leave none behind. Thoroughly. My ability, very useful.]

Daisy's unexpected offer made me reconsider.

[But Daisy, I don't want to use your power for something like this. Plus, this is Earth's—]

[I want to, help. You're benefactor, friend. Grateful person.]

To be honest, I was thankful for her offer. Like she said, insect extermination had to be done thoroughly. Otherwise, they might reproduce again. I didn't want to involve her something like this since she had trouble with people, but she sent me another message, [I want to help.] as if to urge me again.

[In that case, I'd be happy to have you. Thanks, I'll come get you in a bit.]

[Un. I'll get ready.]

After I finished talking to Daisy, I approached Luca Bruno. He

gasped and crawled backward.

“I, I told you about Brightman, so please...!”

“That’s beside the fact.”

I held my spear up and struck down at his ‘place.’ A fountain of blood shot up into the air. Luca Bruno screamed.

“Guaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Kuk, just watching it hurts me...!”

“Sorry, but it doesn’t look cleanly cut.”

I struck down once again, and again, and again. Just in case, I used Mad Typhoon to shred the area. Only then was I certain that I finished the job.

“Guuuuu...”

“Good, perfect. With this, it wouldn’t matter even if you seduced women.”

“Ah, my oppa is too cool...”

“Cool!? Cool!? Hey, Kang Shin! Your sister is still weird! She’s

not normal!”

It was then that a white ball of light appeared above Luca Bruno’s forehead. I didn’t feel any hostility from it, so it wasn’t an attack. I tilted my head and reached out toward it. The moment my hand touched it, a message rang out in my head.

[Would you like to use the Hero’s authority to retrieve the ability given to Luca Bruno?]

Author’s note:

Would a Hero be unable to do what Ciara can...? (faraway look)

I’m sure everyone knows Shin’s personality by now, but once he sets his mind to something, he gets it done. He doesn’t know when to stop. Though it may be a little cruel, now is the time to get used to it! (Eh?)

PS – Yua’s fans, you waited for a long time! It is her turn!

PS2 – Hwaya’s wife-power is nothing to scoff at as well...

Chapter 179. The Power Of The Hero (3)

The moment I heard the message, I froze and found it hard to breathe. I couldn't believe my ears. What? Retrieve his ability? How was that possible? Why was this the first time I was hearing it? Or, did I need to meet certain conditions to make it happen?

However, my questions weren't important. What was important was that I could take away Luca Bruno's ability. It didn't even take me a second to come to a decision. I nodded my head. Immediately, mana began to leave Luca Bruno's body. He let out a painful scream.

“Kuaaaaaaaaaa!”

“Eh? Did the pain come later?”

“Eh... That person, he's getting paler!”

The mana that left Luca Bruno was absorbed by the white ball of light, which then flew into my hand. I stared at it as if I was enchanted. Another message then rang out.

[A suitable candidate for the ability is nearby. Would you like to bestow the ability?]

Without having to ask, I already knew who the candidate was. It was almost... instinctual. I stared at the ball of light, then faced Yua who was looking at me intently. She called me, as if she knew

what I was about to say.

“Oppa...”

“Yua, do you still want to... become a dungeon explorer?”

“Yes!”

Yua immediately shouted aloud.

“I want to help Oppa by Oppa’s side! I don’t to sit back and wait anymore!”

“It’s going to be difficult, think about it, Yua. I want to protect your peaceful daily life. To be honest, I don’t want to ask you this, but...”

“Oppa, please... I want to be by Oppa’s side. Please!”

Looking at Yua’s fervent eyes, I finished what I was saying.

“But... It wouldn’t be bad for you to have the strength to protect yourself.”

“Oppa!”

She jumped into my embrace. I had to try hard to make sure she

wasn't hurt by my armor, and I managed to succeed. Walker made a dumbfounded expression.

“You're too soft on your sister.”

“Wrong, idiot. That's not it. She's my everything.”

I lifted the ball of light into the air. Then, I warned Yua for the last time.

“Know this, Yua. It's going to be a lot harder than you thought. Once you get this ability, there's no turning back. You'll be standing in place of another ability user, fighting terrifying monsters and climbing the dungeon. Your life will be at risk and you might receive grave injuries. Will you still do it?”

“But Oppa is already doing it, right?”

“.. Yeah.”

“Then I want to do it too. I'm tired of waiting for Oppa to come back, while I just sit and study.”

“I'll say it just in case, but you brother and sister aren't normal.”

“Shut it, Walker.”

I pursed my lips and rebuked Walker. Then, I let the ball of light in my hand touch Yua's forehead. The ball of light smoothly went inside her, as if it belonged to her.

The boundless mana Luca Bruno had changed its property and began to completely transform Yua's body. It seemed Yua couldn't bear the shock as she fainted. I held her in my arms carefully.

"I'll have to take Yua back home before I leave for Britain... Walker, do you want to come with me?"

Walker looked at me with a slightly surprised expression.

"Kang Shin... You're changing, bit by bit."

"What."

"No, it's nothing. I will. I want to see Brightman's end with my own eyes."

I retrieved the abilities of the other members of Heroes of Shadow (HoS). After doing it once, I got the knack for it, so it was easy to take them away. It seemed the condition was how much they opposed me, the Hero, and how faithful they were to the original mission of ability user's, monster extermination. As they easily crossed the former standard, it was extremely easy to retrieve their abilities.

It was annoying to keep the small abilities, so I waved my hand

and the balls of light flew away. They were most likely going back to Ciara.

“You can’t absorb them?”

“One ability for one person. Didn’t you learn when you were young, Walker? One pudding for one person.”

“You think abilities are like puddings...? Plus, Brightman always took my puddings, that son of a bitch.”

“That’s what I thought.”

I laughed and remarked.

“Let’s go get your pudding back.”

I left Yua in the house to sleep, and talked to the Revival members about making Yua become an explorer. They were shocked to hear that I could take away abilities from ability users, but no one disagreed with me wanting to make Yua into an explorer. The biggest reason was that I already gave her an ability. She had a powerful ability and was undoubtedly on our side. There was no reason not to let her become an explorer.

Kuhum, I promised to talk to them about letting people become dungeon explorers, but we never said anything about giving abilities! Of course, since it was an impulsive action, I couldn’t say anything even if they were mad.

I left Father to guard Yua and Mother.

“When Yua wakes up, make her into a First Dungeon explorer, Father.”

“Yeah, I got it. I agreed to it, but... was it what Yua wanted?”

“Yes. Um... I’m sorry.”

“No... If that’s what Yua wanted, it’s fine. I was worried about her being too attached to you, so I wanted to prevent her from being an explorer or an ability user... But if it’s to the extent that she obtained an ability and wanted to become an explorer, it seems I won’t be able to see her boyfriend for a while.”

“Don’t worry, Father. Even if she can’t date anyone, I’ll live with her for the rest of my life!”

“Screw off, Son.”

Mother patted the sleeping Yua and looked at me with a grumpy expression.

“So, anything for me?”

“Mom, to be honest...”

“Yes?”

“You’re not suitable with any ability.”

Mother sulked and hit me, but it didn’t hurt at all. I laughed and did my best to protect her hands as she hit me.

I thanked Father again and left the house. First, I went back to the dungeon and joined Daisy. Then, I called Lotte.

“Lotte, come.”

[Understood, Hero.]

Lotte was in the resort area training, but considering she immediately responded to my call, it seemed she had finished her training. When I met up with her, I finally understood what she meant by training.

“Don’t tell me...”

“Yes, Hero. This is the result of my training. No one will be able to stop me now. I can be with Hero no matter where Hero goes.”

In front of Walker, Daisy, and me was not a wyvern, but a young lady. She had long black hair, large black eyes, and a tanned brown skin.

Her eyes had a sense of wildness than reason, while her fingernails were dyed black and curled outward. Lotte was in a human form. Not to mention, her explosive breasts and plentiful butt exuded a feminine charm.

I shouted.

“Why are you naked!?”

“Is it not obvious? I never wore anything in front of Hero. It would be rude of me to hide myself in front of the person I served. Is Hero doubting my royalty?”

“I’m not, so wear some clothes! No, go back to your wyvern form! Sorry, but we’re not going into any dungeons today. We have to fly!”

“Do I have to make other people ride on me again...?”

Lotte frowned and asked in a low tone. She had a charming husky voice.

“Sorry, I’ll make up for it later. If it’s something within my power, anything.”

“Huhu, I’ll remember it, Hero.”

Lotte closed her eyes. By the time she opened her eyes back up, she had gone back to her wyvern form. I jumped on her back with the others, then called Plene.

“Let’s go, Plene.”

“I can go too? Really?”

“Yeah, we’re going to need your power.”

“Ehehe, I’ll do my best!”

Plene jumped on me excitedly. Lotte flapped her wings as if it displeased her, while Walker’s expression stiffened. It seemed he was slightly afraid of Lotte. On the other hand, Daisy was stroking Lotte’s back slowly. Then, she murmured.

“Kill he... If she dies, I want corpse. I’ll bring her back as cool child.”

“I won’t kill her! She won’t die either!”

I initially planned on going to Britain, but after Walker told me Brightman was currently in America, I changed my destination.

After realizing what happened, HoS seemed to have influenced other countries to talk as if I was a criminal, but it wasn’t that effective. There was already a precedent of Guardian trying to

groundlessly condemn Revival and we had turned it around beautifully.

Although they were using mass media all over the world to scheme against us, they were either ignored or criticized. I felt like I knew why.

“Ciara.”

“Just be quiet and accept her help this time.”

“I know. She knows I can’t refuse either. I won’t say she owes me a debt, but she’s mistaken if she thinks I’ll forgive her with this.”

[Hero, there are five fighter jets coming this way.]

“Shoot it down. I don’t care if the pilots die.”

[Understood.]

Lotte’s black flames covered the air. To provoke Dark Wing, the Queen of the Sky, one had to at least be on the same level as the Flame Drake. Seeing the fighter jets crashing down helplessly, Daisy tilted her head.

“Fascinating monster.”

“Those aren’t monsters. They’re fighter jets, a vehicle made by human technology to fly.”

“Weapon?”

“Mm, something like that.”

“Shape. Hard to put mana into. With weapon like that, mana won’t advance.”

“Yeah, my world originally didn’t have many ability users.”

Lotte accelerated. In less than 30 minutes, we arrived at Boston, where Brightman’s company headquarters was located. I couldn’t help but ask Walker.

“Why is a British company’s headquarters in America?”

“Unfortunately, that’s just how it is. It’s easier to do business across the world here.”

“Brightman’s in there, right?”

“Isn’t that obvious? There’s a landing zone on the roof and a helicopter waiting 24/7. It’s a new model that can travel back to Britain in just 2 hours.”

“He’s staying in America for his business...? I’m surprised he can even leave Britain now that Hwaya isn’t there anymore.”

“That’s how it was initially, but Britain seems to think that it is now ‘safe.’”

Not that it was my business, but they sure sent their minds away to a vacation on Andromeda Galaxy!

Lotte flapped her wings and came to a stop. Now that we were right in front of it, I could see just how big the building was. I was too lazy to even count how many floors it had. It was the tallest and largest building in the area. Beyond the windows, I could see people in the middle of work staring at us with widened eyes. I smiled at them and waved by hand. Then, I asked Plene.

“Can you make everyone in that building leave? Also, make them and others in the area stay away from the building.”

“That’s easy! Lalala~!”

Plene’s mana amplified her voice. The effect was immediate. People working mindlessly suddenly stopped as if they were possessed and began to leave. It was happening in every floor of the building.

At the same time, a man on the highest floor stood up abruptly after seeing us. Silver hair pushed back using pomade and the appearance of someone in his 20’s. It was none other than

Brightman. I met his eyes and smirked. Walker, on the other hand, was distracted by something else.

“Oooh, a mass exodus.”

When I looked down along with him, I saw a countless number of people leaving the building through the door. With the unexpected number of businessmen leaving the company, the murmur of the city people even reached us in the air. However, regardless of what the people were talking about, the employee’s’ mass exodus continued. Brightman, who realized what was going on slightly late, shouted at us. I can’t hear you, you son of a bitch.

“Almost everyone’s out.”

“Oh, really?”

“Brightman’s glaring at us, Kang Shin. He looks like he’s ready to charge at you at any moment.”

“Mm, I like courageous people. But... I hate people that scheme behind people’s backs.”

I summoned Peika and Sharana. I leisurely took out a highest-grade Mana Potion and popped open the cork. I put the potion in my mouth and materialized Peika.

“It’s done! Only that annoying man is left in the building!”

“Yeah, thanks, Plene.”

“Ehehehe.”

I lightly patted Plene and drank the Mana Potion. Then, I ordered Peika and Sharana, who were yawning like they were bored.

“Sink this building.”

In less than a minute, the building collapsed.

Author’s note:

Ah, how refreshing. I wanted to take care of these guys for so long, now I can finally do it.

Yua joins the ranks of explorers! As many people guessed, although Yua had no talent for using her body, she was talented in charming! A cute and powerful SS ranker has joined the guild! Now, how would the girls treat their potential sister-in-law!? How would Yua react to meeting her oppa’s daughter!?

Translator’s note:

For those wondering, I changed how I translated Daisy’s speech so that it reflects her choppy-style.

Also, Korea to Boston is about 11400 km. Speed of sound is about 1200km/hr. Lotte's 30 minute cut is Mach 20 speed... spooky.

Chapter 180. The Power Of The Hero (4)

“Kang Shin, you just turned a small city into rubble and dust.”

“Isn’t it awesome? I should take this opportunity to live a grander life.”

Along with the crumbling concrete, Peika and Sharana shredded computers and other electronics. The giant building that had once stood tall was nowhere to be seen and only an empty plot of land remained. I might have a talent for the demolition business.

“Y-You, what...!”

As expected of an SS ranker, Brightman was completely fine. He reached toward Peika and Sharana, but there was no way the elementals would be caught by him. Soon, he realized that it wasn’t the elementals he had to aim for. It was me.

“Thunder Knight! You think you can get away with this? Both you and Korea will pay for it dearly!”

I jumped off Lotte. After recalling Peika and activating Thunder Beast, I pulled my fist back. Seeing me jump down, Brightman gritted his teeth and dodged. However, if I was going to let him escape, I wouldn’t have jumped off in the first place.

“Sharana!”

[Yes, Master!]

“Kuk!”

Brightman froze on the spot as if something was restraining him. I suspected that he wouldn't be able to move for at least 10 seconds. I circulated Peruta Circuit to the limit, and a giant whirlpool of lightning enveloped my fist. I was just about to hit the ground. Seeing Brightman's face getting bigger, I struck my fist toward him.

“Kak!”

Thanks to hitting his face with full force, I didn't receive much shock from the fall. Instead, Brightman slammed against the ground and caused fissures to break out.

“Kuk, Thun-Thunder Knight, you just...!”

“I'm going to hit you now, so don't open your mouth. You might bite your tongue.”

“You just committed a crime— kuhuk!”

I gave him an uppercut. Immediately afterward, I felled him by kicking his chest and mounted him. His face was swollen.

“Thunder... Knight...!”

“That one was for the punch you gave me in Windermere.”

I hammered his face with my fist. His nose, which stood as high as his pride, sunk. I continued with lightning wrapped around my fist.

“This one is for hitting on Hwaya when you’re a middle-aged married man.”

I punched his solar plexus three times. He coughed out blood. As expected of an SS ranker, the way he coughed out blood was different than normal people. I leisurely dodged it and hit him one more time. Then, I focused my mana in my fist and held it up.

“And this one... is for daring to touch my sister!”

“Ku, huk...!”

For the next 10 minutes, I beat him so that he could only barely breathe. There wasn’t a single bone in his body that wasn’t broken. I made sure to break his jaws, so he could only eat porridge for the rest of his life. I made it so that he could never walk, never hold or touch objects, give birth, or have hair.

At that time, Lotte landed. When Walker and Daisy got off, they widened their eyes after seeing Brightman. When I turned around, Walker surprisingly had his mask off and was revealing his face.

“Ed... ward...!”

Hearing the words that left Brightman’s mouth, I remembered that Walker’s name was Edward. I was also amazed by Brightman’s rate of recovery.

“Joshua, what a sorry state you’re in.”

When Walker was with me, he always called Brightman by his last name. Now, however, he was calling him by his first name. They exchanged glances that I couldn’t understand.

“So you really were... alive...!”

“You didn’t know?”

“I couldn’t believe it... until I saw you with my own eyes... But why...”

“I told you, Joshua, that the world won’t continue to go the way you want it to.”

“Fool! Why did you join hands with this kid!”

“You’re a kid too, Joshua. But unlike you, this kid isn’t a selfish narcissist.”

“Kahak... I won't allow a yellow monkey to hold the supremacy over the world...! Edward, it's not... too late. Right now, get this monkey out of here!”

I punched his face again. On the other hand, Walker burst into laughter.

“You hit a new low, Joshua. You tried to kidnap an innocent person just for that?”

“Kidnap? You destroyed Brightman Group's building for something like that!?”

“You've always been like this, Joshua. You treat your belongings like treasures and others' belongings like pebbles on the side of the road. No, the ones you liked, you tried to obtain by all means. I always found your attitude disgusting. I see that it still hasn't changed, even in this situation.”

“Edward...! I gave you everything you had!”

“You're right, Joshua. You did give me everything.”

Walker approached us. His fist was enveloped by a black aura. When did he get so strong? His mana was certainly above an SS rankers. He stopped in front of me and raised his fist. While I stared with widened eyes...

He struck down on Joshua's face.

“Kuhuk!”

“But there wasn’t a single thing I really wanted.”

With Walker’s blow, Brightman lost consciousness. He picked his fist back up and shook off the blood. Then, he said with a grin.

“Punching him like that was on my bucket list.”

“You... You’re pretty cool.”

“You just found out? You really have no eyes for people.”

While a strange air flowed between Walker and me, Daisy shoved her face toward me.

“His mind, I read everything. Lacking information, I can make up.”

“Thanks, Daisy. Then...”

There was no reason to hesitate. I removed Brightman’s ability down to the last minuscule piece. For someone with such a dirty personality, his ability was a brilliant ball of light with a golden luster. It seemed abilities don’t always match their users’ personalities.

I held it toward Walker.

“Take it, Walker, it’s yours.”

“I thought you’d say that... There’s someone I want to give it to. Is that okay?”

“Brightman’s younger sister, Sophie?”

“Ek!?”

Walker looked at me in shock. I made a sly smile and poked his shoulder.

“Not a single thing you wanted, huh... I think I know what one of them is, eh?”

“K-Kang Shin, you— khuk!”

“You just cursed, right? Hehehe, so I’m right.”

“Kang Shin, that’s not it...!”

I rolled Brightman’s unconscious body into a random crater in the ground. He would no longer be able to do anything on his own. If this Sophie was the type of person Walker described her to be, I

was sure she'd take care of Brightman.

“You prepare the Soul Contract. Whether she can accept an SS rank ability is another matter.”

“Can I just... make her into an explorer?”

“Walker, I didn't know you were such a pure-hearted guy...”

“I told you, I have no romantic feelings for her!”

I couldn't give someone an SS rank ability just because Walker liked her. Although I wouldn't impose a harsh condition like the one on Walker, there had to be measures in place to prevent her from doing anything out of place. For example, using her newly acquired ability to create a strange organization like the one Brightman tried to make.

We told everyone in Revival about the matter and voted on creating a new dungeon explorer. Unlike with Yua, most of the members didn't know about her. As she was also the younger sister of Brightman, they couldn't fully trust her either. In the end, most of them agreed under the condition that a Soul Contract would be used. Walker created the contract for Sophie as he trembled.

Then, we headed to Britain. As we took our time destroying Brightman's organization on the way, it took about 4 hours.

Sophie was staying in Brightman Group's luxury hotel in

London. She was in charge of operating Brightman Group businesses in Britain and was 27 years old this year. Unlike her older brother, she was extremely talented in running a business. According to Walker, that is.

“I get it, so can you stop bragging about your girlfriend?”

“She’s not my girlfriend!”

The moment she heard Walker’s voice, she let us into her room. I was grateful. If possible, I didn’t want to deal with Britain’s police.

Sophie was indeed the type of girl Walker would like. Unlike her older brother, she had a slender and tender figure. Though her grey eyes were a bit sharp, her radiant blonde hair mitigated her cold look. Just like her older brother, she had a sharp nose. With her charming full lips, she exuded the charm of a beautiful woman.

“Edward!”

Surprisingly, she jumped into Walker’s embrace the moment she saw him. She didn’t look at us at all.

“You should have told me if you were alive, stupid!”

“Joshua would have found out if I did.”

“Couldn’t you have done it secretly?”

“That’s...”

“I hate you!”

It seemed British people had a custom of kissing people they hated. Wanting to get hated as well, I asked Walker.

“Not your girlfriend, you said...?”

“This is... family intimacy.”

“Edward, I was so worried...!”

“Looks like you’ve been well.”

“Not without you!”

Sophie buried her face in Walker’s embrace and didn’t look up. Walker sweated. He faced us and shook his head, but it was too late. Daisy said bluntly.

“Humans are... really weird... Move imagination to reality... explosive reproduction rate.”

“There would be all sorts of crime, so stop there.”

“No crime, if there’s love.”

“Let’s not talk about that for Walker’s honor.”

Sophie refused to get off Walker for a while. After 20 minutes, she seemed to have calmed down, as she turned her head and faced us. Of course, she was still in Walker’s embrace. She asked with a cold look.

“So, you’re the one who ended my oppa? You won’t make excuses, right? It’s all over on TV.”

“Well, yeah. You can call me Dragon Knight.”

“I can’t believe you appeared in front of his younger sister... Did you kill him?”

“He’s alive. Though, he won’t be able to satisfy any one of human’s three desires.”

“Edward, why did you go under such an eccentric man...?”

“He’s better than your oppa.”

“It’s impossible for anyone to be worse than my oppa. You don’t have to say something so obvious.”

The ball of light I held began to shine even more radiantly the moment it neared Sophie. It meant she was extremely suited to the ability. There wasn't even a need to make her into an explorer. Ciara... why did she turn Brightman into an SS ranker instead of Sophie?

I glanced at Walker, indicating that it would be fine for her to accept the ability. He sighed and took out the Soul Contract. Then, he began to explain. Sophie's eyes widened as she listened to Walker. After about 10 minutes, she gave the reaction I was expecting.

“Edward... Are you telling me to become the head of Brightman Group!?”

“Exactly.”

“Can... Can I think of it as a proposal?”

“No.”

“Edward, stop being so cheeky all the time! This is a proposal, right?”

“No, you and I are in different leagues. With this, you'll be able to stand in a position you're suited for.”

“...”

Ah, I knew that expression. It was the expression Loretta made often. Hwaya also began to make that expression recently. Whenever I saw that expression, things got tiring. It seemed my intuition was frighteningly correct, as Sophie pushed Walker's chest and shouted.

"No! I won't become the head! I won't take that ability and become an explorer or whatever either!"

"Sophie, think of the bigger picture!"

"I am! Without you, I can't focus on any work! The profit this quarter wasn't that good either, and I wasn't satisfied with my report for grad school either! If this continues, I'll be single for the rest of my life and die a virgin! If you won't become my fiancé, I won't agree to any condition!"

"Sophie, you...!"

"Since Oppa's out of hope, I'll have to continue the clan, but I don't want to marry anyone besides you, Edward! I said what I wanted, so come back when you've made up your mind!"

This woman somewhat resembled Hwaya. Was it a British thing? Was everyone so cool and fiery like Hwaya?

Sophie pushed Walker away. Of course, as she was not an ability user, it didn't do much. Walker sighed and turned toward me. I'd

never seen Walker make a face like that.

“Kang Shin, cooperate.”

“Sure, I will.”

When I nodded, Walker’s expression brightened, while Sophie’s expression darkened.”

“You’re not satisfied with ruining Oppa and want to ruin my marriage too? If you do, I’ll use The Brightman Group’s full force to annoy the hell out of you!”

“Listen to me, Miss Sophie. If it’s what Miss Sophie wants, I can put a clause in the contract that Walker has to become your fiancé.”

Walker and Sophie exchanged their expressions perfectly.

“Let’s get along, Dragon Knight! No, my best friend!”

“Kang Shiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiin!”

With this, everyone can be happy! Except for Joshua Brightman, of course!

Chapter 181. The Power Of The Hero (5)

In exchange for acting as a wingman for Walker and Sophie's relationship, Sophie forgot everything about what I did to Joshua Brightman and happily signed the Soul Contract. She then became a Third Dungeon explorer under Walker's appointment. Of course, she also received Joshua Brightman's ability and would act as Britain's protector in his place. When needed, she would also join Revival as she was its member. In the end, everything turned out well.

While we were on our way to China, Walker growled as if he wanted to bite my head off.

"Kang Shin, you...!"

"You should be more honest, Walker. That was the best for everyone."

"She deserves better!"

"You aren't so bad, Walker."

"Really... you're annoying!"

"Alright, it's time to go to China. There are many people we have to take care of there."

Unlike Britain and Italy where HoS was formed without their Guardians' knowledge, China's Heroes of Shadow organization was much more widespread and numerous. As such, it was likely that China's Guardian was involved. I was happy with it. It was more fulfilling if there were more things to destroy!

The moment we entered China's airspace, several fighter jets surrounded us. I already knew China didn't see me in a good light. Seeing the Chinese fighter jets shooting missiles at us, I spoke regrettably.

“Lotte, shoot them down.”

[Understood.]

We swept through everything blocking our path. We visited each HoS facility in our list, which was made perfect through Daisy's ability, and retrieved the abilities of the ability users.

China was flipped upside down and the media condemned me, but I didn't care in the slightest. Instead, after receiving the necessary information from me, Hwaya revealed everything about Heroes of Shadow and what they did. The world once again began to shake.

After about three hours of going wild in China, we finally met China's SS ranker, Xin Shaomei. To our surprise, we found her sleeping in her villa with a pretty girl in her arms.

Although we caused quite a ruckus taking care of all the ability users guarding the outside, Xin Shaomei and the doll-like girl in her arms were still sleeping soundly. Feeling uncomfortable by the fact that they were both naked, I turned to Walker and asked.

“Walker, why are they sleeping like that?”

“I don’t know. Maybe they’re family?”

Our faces both reddened and we couldn’t look at them directly. Daisy then interrupted.

“This woman, lusting after another wo— uuup!”

I quickly clasped her mouth with my hands.

“I got it. You don’t have to say it.”

“... Humans are, really weird.”

Daisy seemed to have thought that she was kindly telling us about it, as she puffed her cheeks angrily.

Since I had to do something about it, I summoned Peika.

“Peika, fry them.”

“You’re bold, Kang Shin!”

“But they’re our enemies, right?”

Xin Shaomei was on Luca Bruno’s list and Joshua Brightman’s memories. Plus, most HoS members in China were affiliated with higher-ups of the government. It made sense to beat them up thoroughly.

“You really are...”

[Both of them?]

“Ah, wait. Daisy, can you read check?”

“I can’t read, they’re sleeping.”

“Then Peika, first wake them up.”

[Un!]

Peika’s lightning dyed the room in gold. Two screams immediately rang out.

“Kyaak!”

“Ow!”

“Both HoS members. Positive.”

“Peika, burn them both.”

[Un!]

Peika coiled around them and discharged a terrifying lightning. Xin Shaomei seemed to have quickly understood what was happening, but with Peika holding her down, there was nothing she could do.

“T-Thunder Knight!? How!?”

“Peika.”

[Un!]

“Kuaaaaaaaaaa!”

The girl in Xin Shaomei’s arms had lost consciousness long ago, while Xin Shaomei desperately shot her mana toward me. I felt a strong debuff aura, but I wasn’t surprised as I knew she was a curse magician. Although I did not expect that she would be able to use it so quickly, it still had to make contact with its target to activate. In other words, as long as I dodged it, it wouldn’t do shit.

“Why isn’t she weakening Peika?”

[Master, there's no way to weaken an elemental. Eit!]

“Krrrrr...”

Xin Shaomei was released only after she almost suffocated to death. However, as her crime was less than Luca Bruno's or Joshua Brightman's, I decided to stop here. Although she would need support for the rest of her life, she would at least be able to walk on her own legs.

I instantly took out Xin Shaomei's ability. Then, before she fainted, I asked.

“Did you join Heroes of Shadow because of some ill-will against me?”

“A-As if...! I just wanted to obtain Hwaya Mastiford for myse—
Kyaaak!”

I then made her just like Joshua. I suddenly craved for a cigarette when I had never even smoked before. Walker seemed to have thought the same way as he began to smoke. After letting out a puff of smoke, he remarked.

“It looks like there are many forms of desire, Kang Shin...”

“Yeah, I just found out today too...”

I gave her ability to Walker. Although he was a close-range attacker, he surprisingly took her ability well. As his main method of attack was dealing a fatal blow after coming out of stealth, Xin Shaomei's debuff ability would help him greatly. In any case, with this incident, China lost an SS ranker.

That day, Daisy, Walker, and I traveled around the world to catch HoS members by reading their memories. Because we were traveling so quickly, night became day and day became night from us changing our location. As a result, we didn't know exactly how much time passed.

With ability users and their organizations disappearing all over the world, the entire world was focused on me. There was even a rumor that Revival was going against all ability users.

After confirming that all of HoS' roots were pulled out, I returned to Korea without regrets. I threw Otus' Secret in my inventory. At least on Earth, I knew I would no longer need it.

I made everyone who went against me pay for their actions. I thoroughly crushed them, retrieved their abilities, and made it so that they would have difficulty living a normal life as ordinary people. If there were people trying to go after me even after this incident, I wouldn't let them off so lightly.

I officially announced my thoughts about this incident and revealed my name. I declared to all Guardian and Freedom Wing members, as well as rogue ability users.

“Even if all you come at me together, you won’t be able to leave a scratch on my finger. Today, you saw the price for daring to touch me. I am the enemy of monsters, cleaner of dungeons, and friend of humanity. As long as you don’t needlessly provoke me, as long as you remain an enemy of the monsters, as long as you desire to dispose of dungeons, I will remain your ally.”

Being on TV with my real face was a strange feeling. In any case, it was no longer a laughing matter. Whether it was television, internet, or radio, my name and face was being shown. I was the leader of the guild Revival, a monster who crippled three SS rankers overnight.

Although Sophie replaced Joshua Brightman in Britain, China and Italy lost their SS rankers on top of many other ability users. Though they probably wanted to kill me, they didn’t have the ability. With this incident, the world came to know what would happen if they went against me.

I became an untouchable existence. I was officially recognized as the strongest on Earth.

“Son, there’s a surge of people wanting to enter our dojo.”

“Ignore them. We only receive one disciple as heir anyways. We call it a dojo, but it’s really only for sparring.”

“Should I make a spear technique for mass distribution? If I organize everything I learned from fighting monsters, I can make a

spear technique that's not for fighting people, but for fighting monsters."

"Hmm, I've thought about something like that too... If we also make a mana cultivation method and spread it, we'll be able to make acquired ability users too."

"... You want to try it?"

"Sounds like a good plan, Father."

We immediately bought all the mana cultivation methods in the Floor Shop and started to analyze them. No matter how much I increased Peruta Circuit's level, it was a unique technique that was hard to pass on to others. As for Father, he didn't even have a proper mana cultivation method. As a result, we had to go through several different mana cultivation methods and pick the one that would be the easiest to teach and pass on to others.

For a week, whenever Father and I weren't in the dungeon, we worked hard to create a mana cultivation method, but in the end, we didn't succeed. The only positive result was that we had a more in-depth knowledge of mana.

"It looks like we'll need more time."

"Let's do our own research and talk about it later. I have to go to Beyond now."

I left the dojo and headed to our house. I already got used to the pouring stares whenever I came out and could easily ignore the high school girls that flocked to ask for autographs. When I went inside my house, however, I witnessed a strange scene. Daisy was at the dinner table, eating.

“Oh, you’re here, Son?”

“Nom, nom.”

“Swallow what’s in your mouth before you talk.”

“You’re here, Shin! Huhu.”

I was used to Ludia greeting me whenever I came home. After all, she’s been here for quite a while now. But Daisy? Wait... I’ve been busy for the past week with analyzing mana cultivation methods and grinding the Floor Master. Was Daisy staying in my house the entire time...?

“Did you never go back to the dungeon?”

“Nom, nom... I did. But the food here is, much better.”

“You came back just to eat!?”

Explorers that lost their worlds and became independent could be brought to other worlds through the Return skill. Once they set

their foot on this new world, they could come back here after entering the dungeon. That was how Daisy was going back and forth between the dungeon and Earth. In any case, the way she sat comfortably on the table wasn't normal. She looked even more natural than Ludia!

“Who cares? It's not like having one more mouth to feed is any trouble for us. Plus, she's a cute girl!”

“Girl?”

Mother, she's at least five times older than you! Feeling a killing intent coming from Daisy, I stayed silent. It seemed Daisy wanted to believe she was 17 just like Loretta.

“Oppa, you didn't eat yet, right? I'll prepare food for Oppa.”

“Ah, thanks.”

Yua smiled sweetly and took out a seat for me. Then, she went over to the kitchen while humming. After getting her ability, Yua stopped sulking and returned to being an archangel. No, she had jumped up seven realms and had become a seraph! She was so dazzling that I couldn't look straight at her.

Using her SS ranked mana, Yua managed to climb to the 20th floor in one week and officially became Revival's guild member.

Her ability was charming. Although she could charm monsters

and attack them while they were confused, her ability was best suited to control monsters. In other words, she was a natural Tamer. Because monsters in the dungeon couldn't be tamed, I told her I would get her a suitable monster to tame, but I had forgotten about it after being distracted by researching mana cultivation methods.

But from what she said during the meal, it seemed she learned to use whips from Daisy and got through with just that.

Even though her ability was charming, since she had the boundless mana of an SS ranker, it was understandable that she could break through the 20th floor with just her Whip Technique. According to Daisy, Yua had a talent for using whips.

A whip was indeed suitable for a tamer. But weren't whips tools for punishment? A whip-using sadistic Yua! That didn't sound so bad... Wait, no!

“Since we're talking about it, we should find a monster for Yua to tame. She can't rely on whips forever.”

“Yes, I wanted to ask Oppa about it too.”

“Ah, before that, Daisy. There was a corpse I forgot to give you last time.”

“Really!?”

This was the second time Daisy used an exclamation mark. Her red eyes flashed. It must have really excited her if she couldn't wait and tried to read my mind. I made a wry smile and scooped a spoonful of rice.

“Once I finish eating, let's head over to the guild house. It's big, so I can't take it out here.”

“Big... Good. Event Raids, I need big undead.”

While Daisy's eyes sparkled, Ludia murmured grumpily.

“You don't give me anything...”

“What would you do with a corpse?”

“Hmph.”

... I decided to prepare a gift for Ludia soon.

When we arrived at the guild house and I took out the Evil Mantis Queen, the one made a big reaction wasn't Daisy, but Yua.

“O-Oppa, I...”

“Yeah?”

“I... feel really good!”

Yua excitedly approached the Evil Mantis Queen’s corpse. Did she want to fry the Evil Mantis Queen and eat it? In that case, I’d have to apologize to Daisy. Thinking about how to tell Daisy about this, I followed Yua. However, where Yua stopped was none other than the Evil Mantis Queen’s read end, where her egg sac was attached.

“Huk! When did these get so big...? They’re dead, right?”

“No, Oppa, these children are alive!”

Well, I’m glad to hear that. NOT! They could survive in the inventory?

“Oh, that’s interesting.”

With that, I began to activate Mad Typhoon, but Yua shouted and stopped me.

“No! I can raise them!”

“But Yua, if something goes wrong...!”

“It’ll be fine. They haven’t been born yet. They’re still blank slates.”

She wasn't wrong. We shouldn't associate the unborn children with the sins of the parent. If Yua could control them well with her ability, they could indeed become our ally. Since we had a way of controlling them, there was no need to kill them thoughtlessly.

“Yua, if it looks like you cannot do it, you have to tell me, okay?”

“Of course, Oppa.”

Yua smiled, telling me to relax, then imbued mana into the Evil Mantis Queen's egg sac. Immediately, the egg sac began to pulsate. It was ripped apart, and hundreds of white mantises popped out.

“Hiik.”

“Why are they white? Is it because of Yua's angelic heart?”

“Larvae, just born.”

What, I can't even joke? Of course, even as I joked, I was fully prepared to send them flying with my spear. However, my worry was for nothing. The calf-sized mantises were lining up in front of Yua, almost as if they knew who helped to bring them to life.

“Wow, they're all so cute, Oppa!”

“Uh, yeah...”

Perhaps, after obtaining her ability, Yua had changed from the younger sister I knew. Even while I nodded with a pale face, more mantises jumped out of the egg sac and lined up in front of Yua. She seemed to be happy, as she swung her whip and shouted.

“Alright, follow Mommy! Let’s go eat, everyone!”

[Kiiiiii!]

[Kiiiiii!]

Over three hundred mantises cheered altogether. Just like that, my young sister came to command the world’s strongest army of mantises. It was the start of the legend of the Monster Queen.

Chapter 182. Skill Synthesis (1)

That day, I finished grinding the Twin-headed Ogre.

[You consumed Ogre's Tattoo Invigoration Elixir to the limit. The Twin-headed Ogre's Tattoo became invigorated to its peak. Your strength increases by 6%. Your constitution increases by 6.]

[You equipped the Twin-headed Ogre Set. Your constitution increases by 27. When the Twin-headed Ogre Set is equipped, you can use 'Ogre Power' once per day.]

[Ogre Power doubles your strength for 5 minutes.]

Though extremely simple, seeing Ogre Power's description put a smile on my face. I immediately extracted Ogre Power from the set and inscribed it into the pocket watch's 11 o'clock position. I clenched my fists. With this, I would be able to freely use Gigantic!

There was also only one skill left to put into the Collector's Pocket Watch. Without having to grind the 60th floor, I could simply extract Crimson Dragon Scale Armor's skill and put it in the watch. When Lin makes me a new armor, I would have to say goodbye to this armor. However, Crimson Roar was too strong of a skill to throw away. It was wise to put it in the pocket watch.

"Alright... let's do it."

Once I made up my mind, I acted quickly. I immediately extracted the skill from the armor and put it in the pocket watch. After a red gem was inscribed in the pocket watch's 12 o'clock position, the watch shined.

[Collector's Pocket Watch has been completed! The power hidden in the watch is released!]

[You became a 'Skill Mixer'. Your magic increases by 10.]

[You obtained the skill, 'Skill Synthesis.' When used, you can choose one skill to act as a base and one or more skills to act as supplements. The base skill and the supplement skills will then become one. Skill Synthesis cannot fail, but the newly created skill may be weaker than the base skill. The pocket watch's skills may also be synthesized, but they cannot be synthesized with the other skills you have learned. Skill Synthesis has no skill level.]

[You obtained the skill, 'Spirit of the Mixer.' Spirit of the Mixer increases the chance that Skill Synthesis produces a skill you desire. It has no skill level.]

“Eh...”

The mixer in my kitchen flashed in my head, which I quickly shook off my mind. Skill Mixer... It seemed it was the natural

result since the pocket watch could only contain 12 skills. Still, combining skills together... As I had never even thought of the possibility, I looked at the skills in the pocket watch.

[Collector's Pocket Watch:

1 o'clock: Orc Lord's Warcry

2 o'clock: Vengeful Spirit's Wail

3 o'clock: Dark Thunder Explosion

4 o'clock: Dragon Skin

5 o'clock: Diehard

6 o'clock: Undead Roar

7 o'clock: Outburst

8 o'clock: Shadow Blink

9 o'clock: Gigantic

10 o'clock: Ice Touch

11 o'clock: Ogre Power

12 o'clock: Crimson Roar]

"Hmm, now that I think about it..."

There were many skills I normally didn't use. I rarely used Vengeful Spirit's Wail or Undead Roar, and now that I wasn't lacking in attack power, I wasn't using Dark Thunder Explosion or Outburst. On the other hand, skills like Ogre Power and Gigantic were better used together.

There were also perfect skills that I couldn't synthesize no matter

what. The first was Orc Lord's Warcry, and the second was Dragon Skin. They were both amazing defensive skills that saved me numerous times before. Although I didn't use Diehard that much, it was the last lifeline I could rely on. As for Crimson Roar, it was slightly annoying that I could only use it when I was alone, but since I couldn't even begin to think about what skill to fuse it with, it was hard to touch it.

"This Skill Synthesis skill is quite a gamble..."

I checked my luck stat. It was unprecedentedly high. Plus, if I continued without doing anything, I wouldn't have the space to put the new skill I'd get on the 60th floor. Sometimes, one had to be bold.

"Alright."

Once I made up my mind, I immediately activated Skill Synthesis. A large stone slab appeared in the air. It was divided into two sides, one having a large cavity and the other having several smaller cavities. It was clear that the larger cavity was for the base skill and that the smaller cavities were for the additional skills. Just like skill description said, it seemed I could use more than one skill as additional inputs.

"Vengeful Spirit's Wail and Undead Roar. Which one do I use as the supplement?"

What was more useless...? Objectively speaking, it was Vengeful Spirit's Wail. Although I didn't use Undead Roar, it was quite

useful since it decreased all living beings' speed by 95%. Although I was also affected by the skill, I could always use Orc Lord's Warcry to dispel the effect for me and my allies.

It was just that I never met an opponent that forced me to use it. If I did, I was afraid that it would have a method to block the skill somehow. This skill... could it really be more useless than Vengeful Spirit's... Kuhum.

“On the other hand, Plene can more or less do the same thing Vengeful Spirit's Wail does.”

They were both trash. Though I felt like I was being a bit too rude to the skills, I was too lazy to change my mind.

“Actually, if I use both of them as supplements, what base skill would they go well with?”

Of the other 10 skills in the pocket watch, I thought hard about which one needed the two skills effects. Orc Lord's Warcry? If it turned out as I hoped, Orc Lord's Warcry would also stupefy others.

Interesting. I liked it.

“Kuk, but I'm not confident...”

At times like this, one needed to experiment. I decided to synthesize skills I didn't really need before I attempted to

synthesize any skill with Orc Lord's Warcry.

“Outburst and Dark Thunder Explosion!”

Like a certain robotic cat pulling magical gadgets out of his 4D pocket, I placed the two skills and placed them on the base and supplement spots respectively.

[7 o'clock skill, Outburst, is embedded in the Skill Synthesis' base skill position.]

[3 o'clock skill, Dark Thunder Explosion, is embedded in the Skill Synthesis' supplement skill position.]

Outburst was more practical than Dark Thunder Explosion, and more importantly, it was less embarrassing to yell Outburst than Dark Thunder Explosion.

“Skill Synthesis!”

The stone slab began to spin in place. Seeing the stone slab glow as it accelerated, I was worried that it would explode like in manhwa. Thankfully, no explosions happened. The stone slab eventually began to decelerate until it came to a stop. The line that divided the slab was no longer there. Instead, a symbol letting out a mystical light was engraved in the center.

I put my hand on the symbol.

[You obtained the skill, ‘Gaia Buster.’ When used, the power of black lightning surges through your weapon and shatters the earth. Countless shards of rocks holding the power of black lightning hurl towards your target, dealing massive physical damage, lightning damage, and curse damage. The more your target is hit by the shards, the more exponential the damage becomes. The target hit by the attack will become paralyzed and stunned. These effects cannot be resisted. Gaia Buster can only be used once per day.]

“Why!? Why!?”

Why did another embarrassing skill name appear!? Even though the skill itself is so good! I swallowed my rage and stored the skill in the 3 o’clock position.

In any case, I was certain about one thing. It was that the base skill’s effects were properly maintained. In that case, now was the time. A man had to be bold when necessary.

“... But before that, let me try with Gigantic and Ogre Power.”

I wasn’t timid. I just liked safety!

[You obtained the skill, 'Gigant Time.' For 5 minutes, you can enlarge your weapon or a part of your body. The enlarged target will be imbued with the divine power of a Giant and give off a terrifying destructive power. When a weapon is enlarged, you will not be affected by the weapon's weight. Gigant Time can only be used once per day.]

“Yes, this is it!”

Perfect! The skill effect was exactly what I wanted, and more importantly, the name was normal! I smacked my lips. This was... fun!

“Now, let's get to the fun part, uhehehe.”

Letting out a strange laughing noise, I activated Skill Synthesis again. I decisively put Orc Lord's Warcry in the base skill position and threw Vengeful Spirit's Wail and Undead Roar in the supplemental skill positions. Then, I suddenly thought that it might be too boring if I only included sound based skills.

“I should put in the pretty useless... I mean, although it's good, it's more fun... I mean interesting to see what would happen.”

I was talking about Ice Touch. I had Sharana who could tie someone down and I had the ice elemental Ruyue, who was getting stronger by the day. To be honest, Ice Touch really wasn't all that usef... uh, it was slightly less effective!

In any case, I threw the skill into the supplement skill position. Three supplement skills! Seeing the stone slab shining radiantly, my heart began to bounce.

“Huhu, good... Skill Synthesis!”

The stone slab spun violently. As I watched full of expectation, the stone slab accelerated, then began to decelerate. In the end, a radiant white symbol appeared in front of me. I felt like it would blind me.

[You obtained the unique skill, ‘Frozen Roar.’]

Ice Touch, you put in too much effort! Why are you so self-assertive!

[When used, all existence, other than you and those you acknowledged as your allies, will be frozen cold. Even if they resist the freezing effect, they will receive a critical status effect that threatens their ability to move. This skill targets all existence, whether they are living or dead. Immediately after the skill is used, you and your allies will be cleansed of all status effects and will regenerate all wounds. For 5 minutes, you and your allies become super-armored, while all abilities are increased by 50%. Furthermore, when facing those affected by Frozen Roar, your chance of landing critical hits doubles. Frozen Roar can only be used once per day.]

[You created a unique skill! Unique skills are skills that possess strength on par with God's powers without receiving the breath of a god! This grand achievement causes all gods to focus on you. Gods related to winter become especially interested. You obtained 3 skill points. Current skill points: 23]

“Wow...”

Something completely unexpected happened...! Ice Touch perfectly combined the other three skills together. I meant to add a little more effect to the skill but ended up making some ultimate skill. Although I was the one who did it, I became touched. I put Frozen Roar in the 1 o'clock position. The gem letting out a white silver glow seemed to be giving off a chill. It seemed not all gems were the same.

However, with some gems missing, it didn't look that good. I organized the gems in the pocket watch. Although I only filled up the 12 o'clock position today, 8 o'clock through 12 o'clock positions were empty again. However, I was more than happy seeing the aura the newly acquired gems were emitting.

[Collector's Pocket Watch

1 o'clock: Frozen Roar (Orc Lord's Warcry + Vengeful Spirit's Wail + Undead Roar + Ice Touch)

2 o'clock: Gaia Buster (Outburst + Dark Thunder Explosion)

3 o'clock: Dragon Skin

4 o'clock: Diehard

5 o'clock: Shadow Blink

6 o'clock: Gigant Time (Gigantic + Ogre Power)

7 o'clock: Crimson Roar]

“Should I synthesize the other skills too...? No.”

Perhaps, I might get better skills later. It wouldn't be too late to synthesize them later. Although I could also synthesize skills other than the ones in the pocket watch, I decided to think about that later.

Right now, I had to go to Beyond.

“Shin-nim, why did you come out so late! I was worried that vitality hit zero!”

“Sorry, Loretta. I had to do something.”

When I left the Floor Master room, Loretta pouted. However, when I explained what happened with the Collector's Pocket Watch, she widened her eyes and nodded.

“I didn't know that there was a stage after. After all, that watch has never been completed before.”

“Why?”

“Shin-nim, do you think it's common to collect all the Floor Master sets?”

“True.”

I nodded in agreement. Then, I told Loretta.

“I’m sorry to tell you this when I just saw you again, but I have to go Beyond’s 5th floor.”

“I hate Shin-nim.”

“I’ll be back soon.”

“Well, that’s true. I doubt even Shin-nim will be able to beat him on the first try.”

“Eh? Him?”

“... Huh? You didn’t know?”

Loretta tilted her head and asked. To me, who was fully prepared to break through an ocean of Orc Lords and Wraith Queens, her following words were like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

“Just like the other dungeons, Beyond also has Floor Masters every 5 floors...”

“Why is that the only part that’s the same!”

No matter how much I nitpicked, there wasn't anyone to give me answers. Just like that, I received a chance to test my newly acquired strength.

... This is unreasonable!

Author's note:

There was someone who predicted this when the Collector's Pocket Watch first came out... I can't remember his username though...

Skill Synthesis! It creates new skills out of usele... less effective skills! As I thought, it's more fun to lessen the number of skills and increase their power!

PS – The contest result will come out tomorrow.

Translator's note:

In the RAW, "Skill Mixer" was actually "Skill Mix Actor" for some reason (like it was literally Romanized in that form). I changed it to Skill Mixer because 1) that sounds better 2) 'mix actor' sounds horrible.

Also, I thought the author changed Gigantic to Gigant, but it

looks like that was a typo by the author lol. It doesn't matter since the skill is gone now!

Chapter 183. Skill Synthesis (2)

I entered Beyond's 5th floor with Loretta's encouragement. Of course, no matter who my opponent was, I didn't plan on dying to them. If my vitality hit zero in Beyond, I would have to wait a whole month before I could re-enter. If I wasted a month, it wouldn't matter how quickly I climbed the dungeon.

Loretta seemed to be taking things slowly after declaring a 2 year time period, but I was different. I couldn't just climb the dungeon for 2 years. I had to work as a Dimensional Mercenary and clear Event Dungeons when they appeared.

Even so, the bastard in front of me was just... morally wrong.

[Kuaaaaaaaaaaaa!]

[Ghost Orc Lord's Warcry rang out! The Ghost Orc Lord is cleansed of all negative status effects! Its attack power increases by 50% temporarily and it becomes super-armored!]

[Soul Echo activates! Ghost Orc Lord's Warcry rings out repeatedly. The Ghost Orc Lord can be affected by Warcry's effect by up to 10 times.]

A half-transparent Orc Lord floating in the air shouted. The dozens of skulls dangling on his glaive also screamed at the same time. They were precisely what increased the effect of his warcry. I

could see him getting stronger right in front of my very own eyes.

“How many times do you have to multiply your strength before you’re satisfied, you cowardly bastards!”

[Guooooooooo!]

When I entered Beyond’s 5th floor, the first thing I saw was the large hall I was currently in and this Ghost Orc Lord. It was relieving to know that I wouldn’t have to spend several days exploring Beyond, but the fact that I had to face this half-spiritual half-living being was quite stressful.

[Guaaaaaang!]

“Damn it!”

Like a ghost in a horror movie, the Ghost Orc Lord blinked forward repeatedly to approach me. Every time the skulls on his glaive cut through the air, they let out ear-splitting screams, which served to stress me out even more.

“Kuk!”

I quickly rolled backward and dodged the glaive. After cutting a few strands of my hair, the glaive struck the ground, making a terrifying sound ring out. At the same time, the entire room rumbled. Feeling strange, I was about to fly up, but before I could do so, I felt my stomach churning and coughed out a mouthful of

blood. I took out a potion and grit my teeth.

“So it doesn’t matter whether I dodge the attack...”

Really, this boss fight couldn’t be more annoying. The Ghost Orc Lord’s attacks were so powerful that it was difficult to block them. Even if I dodged them, the entire room would shake and damage me. I couldn’t help but praise my decision to not bring Lotte and Plene.

One could argue that I would be able to fly with Lotte and dodge the vibration attack. However, even though the hall was spacious, it wasn’t large enough for Lotte to fly around freely. Peika was out of the question for the same reason.

[Guaaaaa!]

“Kuk, I was wondering when it was coming!”

Along with his cry, hundreds of grey ectoplasm arrows shot out from his body. Without a hint of hesitation, I hurriedly summoned Talaria and Sharana to fly up. Right, this bastard was the combination of dozens of Orc Lords and Wraith Queens! If they were the combination of the two, then I should have no reason to lose, I felt more at ease as I told myself this fact.

[Guaaaaaaa!]

The reflective property of the walls was gone. Instead, no matter

where the Ghost Orc Lord's attack hit, the room would rumble and deal damage proportional to the attack's force to whoever was touching the ground. Of course, now that I was flying, it had little meaning.

I tried to think about how I could use this property to damage the Ghost Orc Lord, but as he was flying from the very beginning, there really was nothing I could do.

The hundreds of ectoplasm arrows aimed for my life without mercy. Affected by ten stacks of warcries, even a single ectoplasm arrow dealt immense pain. I danced like a fairy to avoid the incoming ectoplasm arrows, which then struck the room's walls and exploded. Immediately, the room shook with an explosive rumble.

I ended up giving the Ghost Orc Lord an upper hand due to just how unexpected the fight had begun, but if I didn't find my rhythm fast, I would be in danger.

“Alright... Kuaaaaang!”

[You activated Frozen Roar! All enemies in the battlefield freeze in place. All allies temporarily become super-armored and have all abilities increased by 50%. Your chance of landing critical hits double when fighting enemies affected by Frozen Roar.]

A freezing energy descended in the hall. The ectoplasm arrows flying toward me slowed down, and frost appeared on the Ghost Orc Lord's half-transparent body. Using Sharana's power, I

detonated the ectoplasm arrows one by one and thought about what Floor Master skills to use.

Unfortunately, without enough space to even fly around on Peika, there was no way I could use Gigant Time. I also couldn't use Gaia Buster, as it would strike the entire room with too great a force.

“In that case... Kuk. Ruyue!”

[Got it!]

The Ghost Orc Lord had already broken out of the ice. I tried to tie him down again with Ruyue's power, but it was not enough. In the end, I stopped thinking and tightened my grip on my spear.

“As if I only fought with Floor Master skills! Prepare to die!”

I charged toward the Ghost Orc Lord, as I poured more mana into Ruyue and told her to restrain the Ghost Orc Lord more. At the same time, I drank a Mana Potion and formed chaos flames on my spear. The Ghost Orc Lord let out a horrifying scream as if he wanted to kill me with his scream alone.

[Guaaaaaaaaaaa!]

“I don't have the time to be wasting here, you ghost orc!”

I dodged his slow-moving glaive and thrust my spear toward his waist area. He may have a spiritual body, but he couldn't dodge my chaos flames. Although the ice restraining his movements completely melted away, he was affected by inextinguishable black flames in exchange.

Maddened by the flames, the Ghost Orc Lord shot out more ectoplasm arrows and launched aura waves by swinging his glaive. The room shook endlessly, damaging me while I was still flying. Although the vibrations came from the walls, the sheer force had even spread through the air. Things couldn't continue like this. The ectoplasm arrows seemed to be shot towards me almost infinitely, and I couldn't continue to let it happen.

“Kuuk... First, I'll get rid of this vibration. Ruyue, go back for now!”

When Ruyue left, the Ghost Orc Lord went wild with joy. He charged toward me and swung his giant glaive like a scythe.

I shouted.

“Kuaaaaaaang!”

[You used Crimson Roar. Everything blazes in flames.]

In terms of visuals, nothing could come close to this skill. The

entire space blazed and dealt critical fire damage to all targets other than me! The Ghost Orc Lord's painful scream was especially memorable. The chaos flames expanded their territory as if the blazing space was their home.

[Guaaaaaang!]

At that moment, the Ghost Orc Lord threw his glaive at me. It seemed even the blazing space couldn't stop the super-armored state. I sent an aura imbued with chaos flame flying toward him and dodged the glaive. The glaive then struck the ground. The entire room rumbled from the shock. That was the end. I sighed in relief.

“So it really was effective.”

Even the words I just said disappeared after a weak vibration. It was impossible to turn the space into a complete vacuum, but it seemed what I planned worked.

Mechanical waves could not travel without a medium. As Crimson Roar burnt up all the air when it activated, vibrations became unable to travel through the air. Of course, this put me in a tough spot as well. Even though I was a level 56 explorer, I couldn't last long in a space without air.

[Peika, let's go all out!]

[Got it, Master!]

I raised my spear and held my breath. I concentrated my strength on one point and charged towards the Ghost Orc Lord with Peika.

“Take this and die! Heroic Strike!”

The Ghost Orc Lord also let out a hearty scream and charged toward me. Well, since I couldn’t hear him, I only assumed he did.

Plus, his annoying horror movie-like blink skill was active again. If I didn’t focus, I would lose a limb in an instant. I had to land dozens of attacks, but my opponent only had to land one to fatally wound me. Now, there was no air to breathe either. Really, nothing was going my way.

There was nothing more terrifying than fighting a super-armored enemy, but I smiled. A warrior shined when he fought with his life on the line, and a warrior shined the most when he overcame everything and came out victorious!

I flashed my golden Evil Eyes and thrust out my spear, filled with chaos flames and Heroic Aura. The spear shot past the Ghost Orc Lord’s glaive and pierced his side.

[Kuaaaaaa!]

“Cry louder, you pig ghost!”

I shouted to encourage myself and thrust forward again. The chaos flames devoured his entire body.

*

[You cleared Beyond's 5th floor. You obtained the qualification to challenge the First Dungeon's 56th floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats. Your maximum HP and MP increase by 2%.]

[Experience has been added to skills you frequently used to progress through Beyond's 5th floor.]

[You defeated Beyond's 1st Floor Master, Ghost Orc Lord, alone! You obtained the title, 'Ghost Orc Lord Slayer.' All stats increase by 1.]

[Choose your reward.]

[1. Echo Ring]

If you're only going to display one item on the list, don't tell me to choose! Even as I complained, I quickly picked the reward and ran out of Beyond. After all, even I couldn't stay without air for long.

“Puha!”

The moment I arrived at the Floor Shop, I took in a deep breath and breathed out. Loretta looked at me with widened eyes.

“Shin-nim, you succeeded!?”

“Huu, huu... Of course.”

“You’re really rewriting history.”

“That’s not true. I didn’t get the first reward.”

I responded as I looked at Echo Ring, a metallic ring with a transparent jewel. Loretta retorted.

“Shin-nim, Beyond’s explorers are all people who defeated Floor Masters alone. Shin-nim is the newest Beyond explorer. Did you really think that the first reward for Beyond’s 1st Floor Master would be untouched?”

“Kuhum...”

“Although there are only three left now, there were other Beyond explorers in the past. Of course, most of them are now...”

“It’s fine, Loretta.”

A heavy silence flowed between us. Loretta made an awkward smile and turned away. This woman still couldn’t fully believe in me. She was constantly trying to create a ‘reason to run.’ Though I knew she was doing it for me, it wasn’t of any help to me now.

Of course, since Loretta would probably get sad if I said anything, I decided to just look at Echo Ring’s option.

[Echo Ring (Unique)

Durability – 230/230

Equipment Requirement – None

Option – Doubles the effect of all roar type skills.]

“Oooh.”

Although it didn’t raise my stats, it was a perfect item that was practically made for me. As if it was waiting the entire time, it came out right after I obtained Frozen Roar! Of course, it also represented the property that Beyond’s 1st through 5th floors had. I immediately took off my gauntlet and put the ring on my finger.

Loretta slowly approached me as she studied my expression. She was indeed too cute.

“D-Did you get a good item, Shin-nim?”

“Yeah, it’s a fantastic item, enough to reduce Loretta’s worries.”

“Stupid, I’d be worried even if you’re armed with a holysword...
hiing.”

A bitter smile appeared on my face as I thought about the Luka continent’s Hero. Right, I shouldn’t get arrogant. People much stronger than me fell helplessly in front of their ‘enemies.’ I couldn’t be happy with just clearing Beyond’s 5th floor.

As if to distance myself from Loretta, who was getting dangerously close, I escaped the Floor Shop.

“Alright, Loretta, I’ll be going straight to the 56th floor then!”

“Eh!? No, stay with me a bit more!”

“I don’t have any time to waste!”

“Shi, Shin-nim! B-Before that!”

“See you on the 56th Floor Shop!”

Loretta shouted louder.

“Before that, buy a Magic Detector! It’s 150,000 gold!”

“... I’ll take one.”

Apparently, the 56th floor had mimics and golems, which were only detectable by using the Magic Detector.

... If you’re just going to sell me an item, don’t make the atmosphere all weird!

Author’s note:

I researched the part about waves and vibration, but as I’m a liberal arts major, forgive me if I got something wrong.

Translator’s note:

Don’t worry, Author. You just said “waves”, which I changed to mechanical waves. Mechanical waves need a medium, electromagnetic waves don’t! (please forgive me if I’m wrong)

Chapter 184. Skill Synthesis (3)

From what I've seen in the dungeon so far, the dungeon was designed for party play. The width of the passageway and the number of monsters that appeared together were the biggest examples. There was no consideration for explorers climbing the dungeon alone.

However, the traps and rewards were also party-based, meaning that solo explorers had more to gain. Traps were more dangerous when a large number of people tried to cross them. There were traps that activated when a certain number of people stepped over an area. For example, there were traps that caused the ground to collapse or traps that rained down arrows. For ordinary explorers in parties, it became even more difficult to dodge these traps as others would panic. Of course, for me, it was hard to say whether these traps could even deal 1 HP worth of damage.

In any case, parties were weak to traps! It was quite cliché for trap experts to die because their party members got in their way!

I had a lot to say about traps, but I had even more to say about rewards. The most common situation explorers would face while climbing ordinary dungeon floors was deciding who the reward from named monsters would go to.

There were also conflicts as to who would rest, who would get the few high-grade herbs and materials, and who would get the extremely rare Epic-grade items dropped by bugged monsters.

The 56th floor was filled with mimics. Just like their name suggested, they mimicked weapons, treasure chests, wardrobes and the like to trick explorers. They devoured unsuspecting explorers that touched them or simply just passed by. Because of their outstanding disguise, it was extremely difficult to tell them apart, and even if one did, they were quite strong so it was hard to face them.

As such, the best way to deal with them was to identify them and quickly attack them while they were still thinking about how to eat you. Of course, this was easier said than done. Fortunately, as everything on the 56th floor were mimics, it was quite easy. If I was suspicious, I just had to stab my spear through it.

If I was in a party, someone might have gotten caught off guard, but there was no problem for a solo explorer like me. I almost didn't even need a Magic Detector.

“Damn, but even I can't help it sometimes...”

After I killed a named monster, I instinctively reached out to grab the fancy sword that replaced it. The sword then opened its mouth and bit down on my gauntlet. It was only then that I realized the mistake I made and burnt it with my lightning.

These mimics provoked people's instincts. People instinctively grabbed treasures, dodged traps, opened doors, opened boxes, climbed stairs, went into holes... Kuhum!

“What's making me grab things when the Magic Detector is

ringing?”

I despaired at my patience. Initially, I was going slow, being wary of any traps, but I decided to change my method. I left Sharana to destroy any traps and charged forward on Ruyue. With that, I escaped from my desires. I was going so fast that I couldn't see anything!

Suddenly, a stone decoration popped out in our path. Thinking that it was a mimic, I swung my spear to cut it, but the stone decoration grabbed my spear and put a stop to our charge.

[Guaaaaaaa!]

“Ah, it's a golem!”

Mimics had excellent disguising ability, but poor durability. Golems, on the other hand, were magical creatures made out of stone or steel, and were naturally tough. Of course, toughness was rather subjective. I clicked my tongue and burnt the golem with chaos flames.

[Kuaaaaaaa!]

“Sorry, but both mimics and golems are weak as hell...”

‘What if the entire passageway was a mimic? Would it even hurt me if it devoured me?’ The moment I thought that, the Magic Detector vibrated and the passageway began to narrow. So there

really was a mimic like that!? Wait, I paid 150,000 gold for this thing, but it noticed even later than me! Loretta cheated me!

“Peika!”

[Do I burn it?]

Peika immediately shot powerful bolts of lightning left, right, up, and below. When they crashed with the walls that were closing in, a loud boom rang out. The mimic was dead. Before its body scattered into particles, Ruyue accelerated and got out of the passageway.

Immediately afterwards, however, a mouth opened up on the floor to devour Ruyue and me. I raised my spear and struck down on the ground. As the Magic Detector continued to ring, I didn't know exactly where the mimics and golems were. To put it bluntly, it was useless.

In the end, I acknowledged that it wasn't the best idea to charge forward on Ruyue. I drank a Mana Potion and decided to take a special measure. I dematerialized Ruyue and flew up by using Sharana's power. I didn't want to resort to this method because of its large mana consumption, but there was no other choice. Since I couldn't trust the floor or the ceiling, I could only trust the air!

Even after that, I faced golems pretending to be walls, treasure chests that smacked their mouths, mimics that disguised themselves as the ceiling, which then got out of the way, revealing traps then rained down arrows. Of course, these arrows were also

mimics in disguise. In the end, it took me 3 hours to break through the 56th floor. It was quite slow compared to my recent times.

[You became level 57! You obtained the qualification to challenge Beyond's 6th floor.]

[You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

“Oh, you broke through the 56th floor in just 3 hours! How amazing! ... But why are you so out of breath, Shin-nim?”

“First... Huk... Huk...”

I glared at Loretta and demanded.

“I want a refund.”

Loretta didn't refund the 150,000 gold at all. She instead said she would give me a Queen Elf's Blessing and tried to kiss me. I of course blocked it with one hand and jumped into Beyond's 6th floor.

Beyond's 1st through 5th floors had the First Dungeon's Orc Lord and Wraith Queen, the 5th and 10th Floor Master respectively. I suspected that Beyond's 6th floor would have the 15th Floor Master, Dark Ratmen, and my suspicion was spot on. The moment I entered the first hallway, I faced dozens of Dark Ratmen glaring

at me.

To be honest, I was reluctant to fight the Dark Ratmen. I had been killed once by a Dark Ratman, and they also used the extremely cheaty Dark Thunder Explosion skill. I still vividly remembered being hit by Dark Thunder Explosion. Now, they appeared in groups!

[Gigigigi!]

[Human meat! Human meat is here!]

[It's time for a lightning festival!]

Seeing the Dark Ratmen flickering with black lightning, I swallowed my saliva. If they got me, that would be it. With that, I prepared myself to use Divine Speed. If I used Dragon Skin, Diehard, and Divine Speed well, it was probably possible to break through the 6th floor within a few days.

“Alright, let's... go!”

[Gigigigi! Dark Thunder Explosion!]

They used Dark Thunder Explosion at the same time. I didn't even think to avoid their attacks. I first summoned Peika and gave her ample mana. I then formed chaos flames and prepared myself to combat any lightning that flew toward me. At the same time, I prepared myself to use Dragon Skin if I received too much damage.

After I was done with all the preparation, I charged toward them.

... And in 5 hours, I safely broke through the 6th floor.

“Shin-nim!? You died, right? You must have died, right!?”

“Don’t say ‘die’! Say that my vitality hit zero! Plus, if my vitality hit zero, I wouldn’t have returned to the Floor Shop!”

I was still dumbfounded, but... the Dark Ratmen in Beyond’s 6th floor didn’t hurt at all!

Originally, Dark Ratmen’s strong points were their speed, strength, and their powerful skill, Dark Thunder Explosion. Even though the Dark Ratmen on Beyond’s 6th floor was stronger than the one I faced on the dungeon’s 15th floor, they were still slower than me and had paper-like bodies. They died like flies every time I swung my spear clad with chaos flames. Even when they used Dark Thunder Explosion, my absurd lightning resistance easily shook it off. In fact, Peika became ecstatic and absorbed the lightning. Rather than calling it Beyond’s 6th floor, it was better to call it a power plant for Peika.

I didn’t have to worry about the Dark Ratmen’s attacks at all, and Peika destroyed all the traps with all the lightning she absorbed. It was the first time I simply marched through a Beyond floor.

“Elemental-nim is strangely shiny... Shin-nim?”

“Loretta’s imagination shocks me from time to time, but she only filled her belly with lightning!”

After that, I spent a few days clearing the First Dungeon’s 57th floor, Beyond’s 7th floor, First Dungeon’s 58th floor, and Beyond’s 8th floor. Beyond’s 7th floor had Lizard Knights. As their main method of attack was striking the ground with their spears while they were Dragon Skinned, I simply flew up and charged past them. Unlike in Floor Master battles, I didn’t have to kill all the monsters in Beyond.

The Orc Lords were scary because Warcry affected other Orc Lords and lasted indefinitely with their low cooldown. On the other hand, the Lizard Knights’ Dragon Skin did not affect other Lizard Knights and had long cooldown time. If needed, I just had to wait out Dragon Skin’s duration and kill them off one by one.

Beyond’s 8th floor was even easier. When Lizard Knights used their ground-based attacks, they damaged Dark Ratmen, and when Dark Ratmen attacked, I was fine but the Lizard Knights went epileptic. While they inadvertently fought each other like idiots, I leisurely took care of them one by one.

Climbing the dungeon couldn’t have been easier. If things continued like this, it was entirely possible to conquer the dungeon in 2 years! I became intoxicated in this feeling. I was getting stronger by the day and climbing the dungeon was extremely smooth. Even if I tried to stay humble, I couldn’t help but feel that I could do anything.

[Crown Prince... Please, help me.]

Until one day, I got a message from a friend.

Author's note:

Toika's main skill is skipping through all the uninteresting parts!
Dududududu!

You waited long enough! Here's the result of ICDS's first popularity contest!

1. Everyone's favorite character?

1st – Everyone's heroine, Loretta! This is the power of the Cult of Loretta! (122 votes)

2nd – I'm the main character! Kang Shin! Don't look at the vote difference! (47 votes)

3rd – The main character's perfect (idiot) duo, self-proclaimed strongest on Earth, Kang Yungoong! (23 votes)

4th – The world's greatest younger sister! The number 2 heroine, only after Loretta! Made of 99% imagination and 1% love, Kang Yua! (17 votes)

5th – The veiled lightning elemental. For her master Kang Shin, she is infused in his weapon once again! Peika! (16 votes)

6th – The one the author likes! She barely kept her honor! Hwaya Mastiford! (14 votes)

7th – Wait, there are two heroines left, why are you...!? The tsundere blacksmith, the draconian, Lin! (4 votes)

Also, Orc Lord, Ye-Eun, Reaper, Ruyue, Ren, Loro, France's ranker (Laz Michel), Peruta, the motion-sickness elemental, Ciara, Sumire, succubus, Pepper, mermaid, message noona, etc got less than 4 votes. I (the author) also got 1 vote, thank you! (Someone's missing, who could it be? I just cry... T.T)

2. Everyone's favorite heroine?

1st – The person who caused the readers to create the new religion, 'Cult of Loretta'! The forever-17 elf, Loretta! (200 votes)

2nd – I didn't think that there would be such a wide margin, but at least she has more hope than the others! Earth's strongest heroine, Hwaya! (34 votes)

3rd – Is this where she resolves her grudge of not being on the first vote!? The unfortunate heroine, Ludia! (20 votes)

4th – Sorry, Ye-Eun, it's my fault!! Su Ye-Eun! (18 votes)

Also, people voted for Yua, and some even voted for Shin's father!!

3. Harem vs pure-love, the winner is...!?

Harem (137 votes) vs Pure-love (128 votes)

Yep, it was super close, just 9 votes. Still, harem wins! This only makes the author's head hurt. No matter what I do, I'll get cursed... aaah! In that case, do I go for the virgin-route that got 7 votes!? No, but isn't the virgin-route too cruel!?

That's it for ICDS's first popularity contest. I'll keep the result in mind for the future. All it did was tell me how great Loretta is...
(distant look)

Chapter 185. Skill Synthesis (4)

[Please, Crown Prince. I can't protect them alone!]

“W-Why can't I be happy...!?”

[C-Crown Prince?]

“N-No, nothing.”

By now, I was used to something happening whenever I was climbing the dungeon smoothly. Event Dungeons, Event Raids, Luka continent, and now this! Just when I thought I could focus solely on the dungeon, Ren was calling me. I couldn't let my guard down at all. In fact, I felt like someone was doing this on purpose.

I gritted my teeth and asked Ren.

“What's up, Ren? Tell me.”

[... No, Crown Prince, you must be having a hard time too. It was my mistake, forget what I said.]

“Cut the crap and tell me.”

[Y-Yes!]

Ren's world, the Panan continent, was a peaceful land where humans and beastmen coexisted. Of course, both races had to face numerous difficulties until the peace was achieved, but they had reportedly done it. At least, that was how it was 200 years ago.

Things began to change one day. Small conflicts between humans and beastmen increased in scale as time went on until one day, a war broke out between a human country and a beastman country.

“I'm not really interested in Panan continent's history.”

[What if it was the history of an outsider's invasion?]

The war raged and blood flowed like the ocean. Another country then jumped into the war, and the entire continent became enveloped in the war. Before a dungeon explorer revealed the truth of the matter, everyone thought it was a self-created disaster by humans and beastmen.

That wasn't it. It was the doing of Panan continent's invaders, the 'El Patiz.'

“El Patiz?”

[That's what they call themselves. We call them 'brain worms.' That's what they are. Bugs that crawl into our brains.]

According to Ren, these brain worms crawled into the brains of sleeping victims and ate the content. The victims would die and

the brain worms would then pretend to be the victims they killed. The only way to detect whether someone was eaten by a brain worm was to use a special magic for detecting life signals.

Brain worms could perfectly imitate the actions of their victims to the point that not even the victims' own family members could tell anything apart. However, the fact that they were still brain worms didn't change. When enough brain worms gathered, they would finally reveal themselves and drag others into their hell.

[Luckily, people with high mana could detect brain worms in their initial form and avoid them. The explorers who found out about the brain worms' existence did their best to find their weaknesses, and they notified everyone that they were the ones who caused the war. However, the effect was minimal. Upper echelons of most countries' government had already turned into brain worms, and soon, stronger brain worms that Panan continent's warriors had trouble with began to cross over.]

“And?”

[Unable to stop the war in time, the population of Panan continent plummeted. The brain worms' forces only grew stronger as they consumed more people and strengthened themselves... In the end, 170 years after the onset of their invasion, an incident happened that made everyone lose their hopes against the brain worms.]

I had a feeling I knew what was coming. Though I blocked my ears, I could still hear Ren's voice.

[The Hero of that generation... the Lion Empire's Golden Lion Emperor was eaten by a brain worm.]

“Ren...!”

[The worm that controlled the Hero was the one that ruled over all other worms. It was the so-called world's enemy. Regardless, after it gained the power of the Hero, the worms began to conquer the continent at an unprecedented rate. They were now able to reproduce in our world.]

Ren said that the only way the Panan continent's people could survive until now was because they found the brain worms' weakness.

[The ocean. They can't enter the ocean. Not even the worm that obtained the Hero's body could enter the ocean. We realized that the worms avoided invading ocean-based countries. Since they couldn't cross the ocean, they used another passageway to deploy their troops to the countries in the ocean.]

“You should have noticed that sooner!”

[I already told you. They were extremely meticulous and skilled in hiding their weakness. An explorer then ran to the ocean to escape the brain worms noticed coincidentally, and it was thanks to this coincidence that the remaining explorers could breathe a sigh of relief. Of course, that didn't last long either.]

“Why?”

At my question, Ren became silent for a while. Then, he confessed in a somber tone.

[Crown Prince... Beastmen are unable to swim.]

Beastmen couldn't enter the ocean. Most of Panan continent's survivors were beastmen. Thus, they could only resort to creating a base near the ocean and using ocean water to fight against the brain worms. Thankfully, they had someone who could wield the power of water, but after he was eaten by the brain worms, the last hope had disappeared.

[This was around the time Sir Lebuik died. Most of the remaining explorers also died then.]

“Ren, right now, you're...”

[I'm protecting eight children. Five beastmen, three humans. When the base collapsed, I barely managed to save these children and found a safe place to hide. By climbing the dungeon, I found food to bring back for them. This was when I met Crown Prince.]

This might sound harsh, but there really seemed to be no hope. Regardless, I urged Ren on since I had to hear what was happening now.

“Ren, tell me the current situation.”

[They discovered our hiding place. We’re running.]

It was rather simple.

[We’re currently resting after defeating the pursuers. But soon, a stronger squadron of brain worms will attack us. I ended up talking to Crown Prince out of desperation.]

I understood how Ren was feeling. He most likely wanted to get whatever help he could. I sighed and asked.

“So, what are you planning to do?”

[Before it’s too late, we have to go back to the coast. We have to create a base that will protect us from them. We have to drive the ocean water and create a manmade island of some sort.]

“Sounds like tough work even when you get to the coast.”

[Ri... Right.]

After thinking for a bit, I continued.

“Did you submit a request for Dimensional Mercenaries?”

[Yes, but no one came.]

“How about using Dimensional Travel skill to move them elsewhere?”

[That’s impossible, Crown Prince. Dimensional Travel can only be used alone.]

“Why don’t you put some skill points into it and... ah.”

Right, that was my skill! The original Dimensional Travel skill didn’t have skill levels, so it didn’t matter how many skill points you had... Wait, but there’s Return! If I could use Return with the eight children other than Ren...! My Return skill was currently level 4. I could take up to three people with me. As I had never distributed skill points into it, I used 15 skill points to raise it up to level 8.

[Return became level 8! It can be used 6 times per day and you can choose 6 returning points. You can bring up to 5 people.]

Damn, it’s not enough...! Once I came back to Earth using Return, I couldn’t go back to Panan with Return. I had to use Dimensional Travel to travel between worlds. Because of Dimensional Travel’s cooldown, it wouldn’t work out. I bit my lips.

Meanwhile, Ren was still talking.

[Crown Prince, forget about what I said. I'm Panan's Ren. This much danger, I can get through by myself.]

“No bullshit allowed.”

[I'm not a bull, I'm a lion!]

In this situation, there really was only one thing I could do. It was to ignore Ren's request. Ren knew he was making an unreasonable request, and he took it back as well. A brain-eating worm... disgusting. It wasn't that I didn't feel any sympathy for Ren, but there was just no hope.

Thus, I told him.

“Don't die before I get there.”

[Crown Prince, I told you, don't come! I was just ranting!]

“If you die, I'll kill you, got it?”

[Crown Prince!]

“Shut it! If I think it's too dangerous, I'll escape by myself!”

[Crown Prince...]

I hung up on Ren. Then, I contacted the person on my friend list whom I never contacted before.

“Lebuik, are you doing well?”

[P-Panan continent requested for Dimensional Mercenaries... What do I do, Rookie?]

“You should know who made the request.”

[N-No one wants to go...! Rookie, tell Ren-nim to get out of there! Please!]

“Ren doesn’t plan on leaving. He’s protecting eight children.”

[Eight... That’s two less...]

“Lebuik, what are you going to do?”

[Me? What, are you telling me to go to Panan continent?]

“Tell me quickly. What are you going to do? Tell me what you’re thinking.”

[... Rookie, you...]

“My Dimensional Travel skill is a bit special. I can bring someone

else with me. So, Lebuik, what are you going to do?”

As I spoke to her, I put skill points into Dimensional Travel. Lv 2, Lv 3, Lv 4... It was then that the number of people I could bring increased by one. The cooldown decreased by quite a lot to two months. I now had 1 skill point left. There was no going back.

[W-What do you mean... I, I can't go. I'll die if I do. Definitely!]

“You might die, that's true. I didn't make my decision easily either.”

[Then how can you say it like it's nothing? Are you looking down on death!? If a brain worm kills you, you can't even enjoy eternal rest! Your brain will get eaten and your body will become their toy!]

“But if I don't go, the same will happen to my friend. Lebuik, I'll give you 5 seconds, so make up your mind. If you can't, I'm going to go alone.”

[W-Wait! No, I won't... I won't go! I escaped by myself, so how can I, at this point...!]

“3, 2, 1...”

[Uuuuut! Fine! I'll go!]

I smiled. As expected of a woman in love!

“Good. I’m sure Ren will be touched. Maybe, he’ll be so touched that he’ll hug you.”

[H-He will hug me? Ren-nim will? Gulp... N-No, I’m not going to fulfill my desires...! Even I wouldn’t throw away my life to satisfy my lust! I just want to make up for the loyalty I failed to protect!]

“I got it, so meet me at the First Dungeon Residential Area’s pub, ‘Cocked.’ Make sure you’re fully prepared.”

[Rookie... Okay.]

I hung up on her as well. Then, I let out a long sigh and opened the guild communication channel.

[I’m going to go do a Dimensional Mercenary request. It might take a while, but don’t worry.]

[Is it safe?]

At my sudden announcement, the guild communication channel became noisy. Hwaya then asked me with a worried voice. Though I was thankful that she was worrying about me... for some reason, I broke out into laughter.

[What requests are safe? But well, it’ll be fine.]

I spoke honestly.

[I can see the ending.]

Author's note:

Next chapter will showcase a hard-to-see party composition!

PS – Do you see the ending Shin saw?

Translator's note:

Tfw the pub's name is 'Cocked'... Literally, he spelled it out in English :thinking:

Also, the last bit was a The World God Only Knows reference.

Chapter 186. Skill Synthesis (5)

I could only bring one explorer with me using Dimensional Travel. However, contracted beings like elementals and tamed monsters could come with me just like how I could bring them to the dungeon from Earth.

I could always unsummon the elementals if things got dangerous, but tamed monsters were a bit more troublesome. Both Plene and Lotte made a fuss about coming with me, but Plene wasn't suited as an elite force. She couldn't defend herself well, and her ability wasn't suited for direct fights. Plus, I didn't know how much her ability worked against these brain-eating worms. Although I felt sorry for leaving her out, there was nothing I could do.

On the other hand, Lotte didn't lose to many in terms of strength. Plus, now that she could transform into a human (I was curious just how she obtained that ability), her range of activity increased as well. She was all around a reliable companion to have.

For the record, I made sure that she wore proper clothing when she was in her human form. I gifted her some elastic leather clothes. Although she refused to wear clothes at first, when I pouted and acted sad that she wouldn't accept my gift, she frowned and put the clothes on. Huhu, I was getting more skilled at handling my subordinates!

Lotte looked smugly at Plene when I told Plene that she couldn't come but Lotte could.

“Huhuhu, you see, Fish? This is the Hero’s choice.”

“I’m not a fish! I’m a siren!”

“No... It’s just that your ability isn’t suited for what I’m doing, Plene. Wish us a safe return.”

“Hic... Okay.”

“You’re weak! Do you know why, Fish?”

“I’m not a fish! And I’m not weak! Shin said I was a good singer!”

“You are weak because you are lacking. In training...!”

“Training?”

“Yeah, yeah, let’s go, Lotte.”

Ever since she transformed into a human, she was learning lots of weird things.

Regardless, there were only 5 minutes left until I had to go see Lebuik at the pub. I hurriedly left the resort with Lotte and headed to the First Dungeon’s Residential Area. The first thing I did was accepting the Dimensional Mercenary request. Then, while I was making my way to the pub, the people’s attentions became focused

on me.

“It’s Revival’s master.”

“Earth’s Hero?”

“Did you check the guild rank? It’s already B.”

“Hey, don’t even think about messing with that guild. An administrative guild has its back.”

We’re different from Desert Scorpion! We have no intention of abusing an administrative guild’s authority! Though I wanted to tell them off, I didn’t. Lotte became angry instead.

“Are they cursing Hero? Not that I think highly of Hero, but it is true that Hero is strong enough to make me submit. How strong are they that they’re cursing Hero in the middle of the street? I must test their strengths!”

“Lotte, please. Also, don’t use words like ‘submit.’”

“Hero should be proud. Hero made me submit without using force. That shows how grand Hero is!”

Our surroundings became noisy.

“Hey, did you hear that?”

“I was wondering if it was a new woman. It’s as I thought...”

“Without using force... That must mean...”

“Ugaaaaah!”

“Hero?”

I grabbed Lotte’s hand and ran to the pub using Gale Track. There, I saw Lebuik with a solemn expression on her face. She wore a set of upgraded armor from the last time I saw her and she had a large black claymore on her back.

“Y-You’re here. I thought about it for a long time, but if I could see Ren-nim’s face one last time, I’ll have no regr— Kyak!”

“Let’s go!”

If I stayed in the Residential Area any longer, my reputation is going to plummet to the point of no return! Lebuik seemed to be giving excuses as to why she was going to Panan, but I was too lazy to listen to her. She should just say she wants to see Ren!

“Alright, Dimensional Travel!”

“W-Wait!”

“Too late!”

The Residential Area melted down. As if to paint over the now blank canvas, a new world appeared. The sky was pitch black with not even a single star in sight. Everything was quiet. We were in a small open area in the middle of a dense forest.

“I said wait a bit, Roo...”

Lebuik was just about to say something to me when she suddenly stopped. She froze and seemed to be staring at behind me. Then, she fell as if her legs gave out.

I turned around. There, I saw Ren, who was staring at me with widened eyes.

“Ren.”

“You really... You really came, Crown Prince...? Damn, I told you not to come, so why?”

When Dimensional Travel was used for a Dimensional Mercenary request, the user was naturally summoned next to the person who made the request. Otherwise, the user would be summoned to the friend-listed person. Of course, I would have ended up next to Ren regardless.

Ren's voice was quiet unlike usual. In fact, his voice seemed to be suppressed as it didn't travel well. I closed my eyes, then opened them back up after a brief moment. I had analyzed the mana in the surroundings.

"Is it an artifact?"

"Yes. I obtained an item that prevents sound from traveling far. The dungeon sure is a nice place."

Ren took out a pentagonally shaped pendant and smiled. Then, he frowned again. He seemed to have remembered what he was talking about.

"Wait, don't change the subject, Crown Prince. It's not too late, you should—"

"If I think it's too dangerous, I'll run away on my own, so don't worry."

"... Now that you say that, I'm hurt."

Ren's perked up lion ears drooped. My fists cried at the cuteness unbefitting of Ren's face, but I swallowed down the urge.

"In any case, I'll prevent El Patiz from aiming for Crown Prince, even if costs me my life. I won't stop Crown Prince now, but if it

gets dangerous please do go back when I give the signal.

“Yeah, yeah, I got it.”

“Then first, I’ll introduce you to the children. They haven’t been able to rest for a while, so they practically collapsed when they got the chance. Huhu, you’ll be surprised how cute they are.”

Ren’s ears danced and showed his affection for the children. At that moment, I fully comprehended Ren. I see, so the reason Ren’s trying so hard is... I nodded my head seriously and lightly tapped Ren’s shoulders.

“Ren... Huh, I understand Ren. It’s understandable.”

“Un? Thank you for understanding... But understand what? Rather than that, who’s the beautiful woman next to you? A Dimensional Mercenary?”

Ren, who didn’t have immunity against women, backed up after noticing Lotte. I introduced her.

“She’s my pet.”

“My name is Lotte, the Hero named me. Don’t trouble Hero, Lion.”

“Pet!?”

“Rookie, you’re the worst!”

“... Eh?”

And from that, Ren finally noticed the woman sitting on the ground. Lebuik quickly clasped her mouth with her hands, but it was too late. Ren discovered Lebuik and widened his eyes.

“Sir... Lebuik...”

“Y-Your Highness...”

Lebuik quickly dusted off the dirt on her armor and displayed her respect for Ren.

“So you really were alive, Sir Lebuik.”

“M-My apologies... Even if I have ten mouths, I have no excuses.”

Lebuik’s ears drooped and stuck to her hair. To be honest, just looking at their ears were interesting.

However, Ren burst into laughter. His ears seemed to be jumping around in joy.

“I’m glad! I’m extremely happy that you are alive, Sir Lebuik.”

“Your Highness...”

“I was worried that Sir would have missed the chance to go back to the dungeon. After all, Sir Lebuik’s loyalty was the greatest in our world.”

“N-No, Your Highness. I’m just a defeated cat that turned tail and ran in the face of our enemy.”

So she was a cat... While I was musing about the novel image of a defeated cat, Ren smiled bitterly and lightly tapped her shoulder pauldrons.

“Raise your head, Sir Lebuik. The only reason I’m alive now is all thanks to the swordsmanship Sir taught me. Plus, I’m touched that Sir didn’t forget about me and returned.”

“Ren-niiim....”

Ah, her tail is shaking. The tail protruding out from a hole in her armor wagged gently and expressed ecstasy. To be able to show the appearance of a girl in love just by the movement of a tail, beastmen were amazing!

Worried that Lebuik would jump on Ren, I quickly shoved my hand between them.

“Alright, While I’m happy for your reunion, but let’s leave it at that. Ren, when are we setting off?”

“Mm, I want to let the children sleep longer, but we’ll probably have to leave before the sun rises. The assassins’ tracking techniques are truly vexing. Well, the El Patiz that took over the assassins’ brains, to be exact.”

“Your Highness, I solemnly swear that I shall protect Your Highness no matter what!”

“I’d rather that Sir survives.”

“Your Highness, no, I will...!”

“Those beastmen are weird. Why are they so bent on dying?”

“I was just about to ask the same question, Lotte.”

That’s what I said, but I knew Lebuik was planning on paying the price for abandoning Ren.

To be honest, when I told her about the situation, I only half-expected her to come. I couldn’t really understand if it was love or re-emerged loyalty that was pushing her to do this. I just hoped that her actions would bring good results for both her and Ren.

“A fruit.”

Lotte seemed to be perfectly familiar with her human form, as she jumped to the perfect height and grabbed a fruit hanging on a tree branch. She then wiped it off with her sleeve and took a bite. Her movements were rather wild. Even in her human form, there were traces of her true body. The biggest example was her sharp canine teeth. I took the fruit she held out after taking a bite and also bit down. Then, I asked Ren.

“Is flying a bad idea?”

“We don’t have a way of flying. Even if we did, the sky is filled with enemies. In fact, we’re in this forest so that we won’t be noticed by the enemy’s air squadrons.”

“Ren, can you draw the path from here to the coast?”

“I have a map. I’ll show you.”

“Rookie, you look pretty used to all this...”

“What about you, Lebuik? For a knight, you don’t look used to this at all.”

“You...!”

“Sir Lebuik has little experience on the battlefield. She was my guard knight and sword teacher. Please understand, Crown Prince.

You have experience commanding an empire's soldiers and fighting in wars. It's not right to compare Sir Lebuik with Crown Prince."

For a moment, I seriously contemplated what world's crown prince he was talking about. I mean, didn't I make it clear that I wasn't really a crown prince!? But when I looked at Lebuik, who was tearing up, I lost the will to say anything. I nodded my head generously and took another bite of the fruit. Then, Lotte exclaimed.

"Hero, there's a worm in that fruit."

"Kyaaaak!"

"Crown Prince!?"

From then, I trembled for 30 seconds, but thankfully, it wasn't a brain worm. Thank god... but just when I was trying to show off! If there was a hole, I wanted to crawl into it!

Author's note:

Ren is a ~~holicon~~ saint!

Chapter 187. Skill Synthesis (6)

I burnt the fruit crawling with worms as calmly as I could, then followed Ren to see the children. Now that I thought about it, there was no way I wouldn't notice the brain worms' mana. Of course, it was too late for regrets. The milk was already spilled.

People had eyes in the front of their face so they could look onward. As such, I walked facing onward.(E/N: I think this is a saying?)

“Crown Prince... You have a pretty cute side.”

“Shut your mouth, Ren.”

“Scream again, Rookie. One more time.”

“Shut your mouth, Lebuik.”

I was annoyed that I seemed to have dispelled the last remaining awkwardness between them. When my eyes got sharp, they finally became quiet as we headed to where the children were sleeping. Of course, they weren't too far off. They were in a mud hut that Ren seemed to have made. Lebuik lost the lighthearted smile she had and examined the sleeping children.

“Lina, Uruto, Demi... With just Your Highness' power, they...”

“I lost two children on our way. I still can’t forget the way they looked at me.”

Ren remarked calmly and patted the children’s heads. There were three beastman girls and two beastman boys. Two of the humans were girls and the other was a boy.

I expected them to be 15 or 16 on average, but all eight of them seemed to be somewhere between 10 and 12. Perhaps, they were even younger. Ren’s situation was indeed grave... Thinking about how long they’ll need before they could grow strong enough to enter the dungeon by themselves, I sighed.

“Ren oppa?”

“Sleep, Teeke.”

“Un.”

A human girl who woke up closed her eyes again after seeing Ren. Ren brushed the girl’s hair and looked up. His eyes flashed sharply.

“I’ll show you the map to the coast, Crown Prince.”

“I want to hear Ren’s plan.”

“Do as you wish, Your Highness.”

Lebuik and I retorted and nodded our heads. Ren also nodded in response, then suddenly looked back at Lebuik.

“Don’t call me that, Sir Lebuik. There is no country anywhere in this continent.”

“But Your Highness—”

“Call me Ren. That is the only name I have left. You don’t need to address me with an honorific either.”

“H-H-H-How could I dare call Your Highness’ name! T-T-T-That would be like if we were lovers...”

“... Lovers?”

“It’s just calling each other by name. Stop overreacting....”

It was clear as day that Lebuik was in love with Ren, but as expected of Ren who was single his entire life, he couldn’t catch any one of Lebuik’s signals. Come on, Ren! Why do you think Lebuik came back after she abandoned this world!? It’s because she has a lingering attachment, you idiot! I felt like going crazy from wanting to shout this out loud.(E/N: Says you shin)

“Crown Prince, you look like you want to say something...?”

“No, I know I’m not in the position to say something like that, so I decided not to...”

“Crown Prince is truly mysterious...”

Your head is more mysterious!

“Kuhum, Your Hi... Ren-nim, I still cannot, not use an honorific. I hope Ren-nim understands...”

“Don’t talk respectfully either. Talk to me as if I was Crown Prince.”

“I-In that case... Okay. Is that... good?”

“Excellent. I’m happy, I feel like I’ve gotten closer to Sir.”

“Ren-nim...”

Lebuik’s breathing became unpleasantly rough. I wanted to leave so she could express her carnal desires, but it seemed she still had a hint of humanity left as she restrained herself.

“I, I’m not a knight anymore, so please leave out ‘sir’. Just call me Lebuik.”

It felt like she was just trying to advance their relationship by

changing the way Ren called her, but I stayed silent and just looked at the map Ren opened. Ren seemed to be hesitating, but with Lebuik's persistent persuasion, he conceded and decided to call her by her name. Lebuik immediately messaged me.

[I can die happy! Re, Ren-nim is calling me by my name... Thank you for bringing me, Rookie!]

You don't need to thank me, just go die.

The distance between the forest we were in, Celbitz, and our destination coast, Mileet, was about 1,000 km. To hide our tracks as much as possible, we would travel through mountain ranges. However, there was about a 50 km long distance from the end of the mountain ranges to the coast where we would be in a completely open area. There, we had to be ready to face attacks from the enemy. I couldn't help but sigh thinking just how Ren would have made it without me.

“We'll move about 50 km per day. Thankfully, the children are well-trained for their age, so they can keep up. They were all members of the royalty or the nobility, so they can read, write, and even wield mana. The beastman children are especially outstanding. If needed, they can run while carrying the human children on their backs. Huhu, they're truly admirable.”

“Is that how you've been traveling through the forest until now?”

“That's right.”

I bitterly smiled traveling a thousand kilometers just on foot... I could only laugh in vain. I checked the map again and took out a piece of paper to draw on. Eight small circles and five large triangles. Written with mana, the markings didn't solidify but floated around like ice on water.

"Let's speed up. We should be able to since we're explorers."

"That's true, but what about the children?"

"We'll carry them."

I took the small circles and placed them on the triangles. Ren, who was looking at the paper, asked carefully.

"Crown Prince, there are other dangers in the forest other than the El Patiz. It's full of strong monsters and monsters that like to ambush. If we're carrying the children, how are we supposed to react? If it wasn't for that, I would have carried them in turns."

"Hear me out. To protect the children from ambushes, we'll put Lotte in the back."

I took a black triangle representing Lotte and dragged it behind the other shapes. In her human form, Lotte was a lot more mobile and still retained her strengths as an attacker. She would be able to deal with most situations by herself. Even if we met with someone on par with Luka continent's Demon Army Commander, I believed

she would be able to hold on. Of course, to ensure her maneuverability, she wouldn't carry any children.

“That's not enough. We might be safe from enemies ambushing us from behind, but what about the front? I can tell that this woman is strong, so wouldn't it be better to put her in the front to charge forward without caring about our back?”

“Then we'll have a point of weakness. You can leave the front to me. To be honest, I'm the strongest out of anyone here.”

I dragged the golden triangle representing me and placed it in the front. Ren nodded in response, while Lebuik's eyes narrowed.

“What? You may not know, but I'm a level 69 explorer! I acknowledge that you're strong enough to work as a Dimensional Mercenary, but in terms of strength, I—”

“Lebuik, this... Crown Prince is the guild Revival's master.”

“What!? You mean, the savage who toys with an administrative guild master!?”

“Oi, you, meet me outside.”

5 minutes passed before we got back on track. Ren let out a dry cough, trying to ignore the giant bump on Lebuik's head.

“Since Crown Prince will be in charge of the front, Lebuik and I will have to carry four children each.”

“No, the two of you have to guard the sides.”

I placed two of the triangles on the left and right sides. There was now one large triangle and eight small circles in the middle. Ren tilted his head.

“Crown Prince, sorry, but I’m bad with puzzles.”

“Rookie, stop beating around the bush and get to the point.”

“It’s simple. We’ll let someone else carry them.”

There were five triangles from the beginning. Realizing this now, Ren tilted his head. I grinned and summoned Ruyue. She immediately took my mana, materialized into her humanoid wolf form, and jumped on me.

[Shin!]

“Hi, Ruyue. I’m sorry, but can you materialize in your wolf form?”

[But I like the beastman form more!]

“Please.”

[Okay!]

I liked that Ruyue listened to whatever I asked her to do. I was thankful that she met a master like me and not one with lecherous intentions.

When Ruyue transformed into a giant wolf form, Ren and Lebuik nodded their heads, finally understanding what I meant.

“So she can transform into different forms. Amazing. She was a beautiful girl, and her wolf form is just as beautiful.”

“... Grrr.”

Lebuik seemed to be burning her competitive spirit at Ren’s words, but because I was too lazy to say anything, I just ignored her.

“Ruyue should be able to carry all the children on her back. She has the intelligence to protect them from falling off, and more importantly, she’s quick and silent when she travels.”

[Shin is praising me!?!]

“Of course, Ruyue is amazing.”

[Ehehehe.]

I scratched Ruyue's chin. Ren looked jealous for a moment, then went back to a serious expression.

“So we'll leave the children to her and focus on guarding them.”

“Exactly. Much better, right?”

“... Crown Prince really is amazing. I don't have the words to express my admiration for Crown Prince's abilities.”

“Ren is amazing too. No one will be able to win against Ren's desire to protect these children.”

“Kuuk, don't flatter me.”

Ren blushed and turned his head. His lion ears were twitching, unsure of what to do. Lebuik began to glare at me this time. Wait, was she considering me a competitor!?

Before the sun rose, Ren woke up the children one by one. They all got up silently without a word of complaint, immediately stretching and dusting off their bodies. As if they promised beforehand, they became shocked after seeing me, cheered after seeing Lebuik, and exclaimed in surprise after seeing Ruyue.

“Who's this cool oppa?”

“What a cool armor! Between Hyung and Ren, who wins?”

“Ren oppa is still cooler!”

“Unni, you were alive?”

“Knight noona, I wanted to see you!”

“Look, look! A cool wolf!”

“Wow! What a beautiful fur!”

“Could it be ancestor-nim from the myths?”

“So soft...!”

“Wolf-nim, did you come to protect us?”

Thinking just how overwhelmingly popular Ruyue was, I looked at Lebuik. She was somberly looking at the morning sky.

“I, I’m a deserter... but still, losing to a wolf...”

“They’re kids, Lebuik.”

“Hu, I only have Ren-nim.”

“Why don’t you confess already?”

After breakfast, we put all the children on Ruyue’s back. I could handle Ruyue’s materialization with Peruta Circuit’s natural mana recovery, so I didn’t even need to drink Mana Potions. However, the children seemed hesitant to ride on Ruyue.

“Riding on this Wolf-nim’s back...”

“No, Wolf-nim will get our bad luck!”

“What soft fur!”

“Guys, Ruyue doesn’t mind you guys being on her back, so don’t worry.”

[I hate everyone other than Shin, but I’ll allow it since you guys are kids!]

“Wolf-nim talked!”

“Wolf-nim really was an unni!”

I asked Ren why the children treated Ruyue so respectfully.

“The beastman empire’s founding mythology starts with the meeting of a golden lion and a silver wolf. That’s probably why the children like the girl so much.”

“Is that why Ren likes Ruyue too?”

“Uk, n-no! I didn’t have any impure thoughts! I just thought she was beautiful!”

“Stop, Lebuik!”

“... Lebuik?”

Ren tilted his head and turned around. Lebuik, who was holding her claymore, quickly hid her hands behind her back and smiled.

“It’s nothing, Ren-nim!”

“Crown Prince, did Lebuik do something?”

“No, nothing. So Ren, what do you think about Lebuik?”

“Mm, Lebuik is extremely beautiful and strong. She became my guardian knight at a young age. Even during a war, many soldiers became lovesick because of her.”

Lebuik threw her weapon down, put her hands on her cheeks,

and squirmed. I sighed in relief and stopped Ren.

“That’s enough.”

Ren suddenly grinned and whispered in my ears.

“... Are you interested in Lebuik, Crown Prince? Now that I think about it, you did bring her here... Should I introduce you to her?”

“How did you come to that conclusion, you idiot!”

We didn’t have the time for such petty conversations. Once the children got on Ruyue, we quickly set off. Ren was the slowest, so we had to slow ourselves down for him, but we were traveling about 7 times as fast as when Ren was alone.

Like Ren said, we had to deal with the forest’s monsters. Most of them were quite grotesque, and usually popped out from the ground or jumped down from the trees. However, the reason I made a formation that thoroughly protected the children wasn’t to protect them against monsters. Forest monsters no longer posed any threat to me.

[Kiaaaa!]

[What are you trying to achieve by entering this forest!?!]

An orangutan-like monster with a melted body that seemed to

have bathed in hydrochloric acid jumped down from a tree, while another monster that looked like a spider magnified hundreds of times and wrapped in iron armor popped out of the ground. Ren and Lebuik both held up their claymores and prepared to face them. I, on the other hand, simply stared at them with my eyes.

They became stone and clunked down.

“Ek!”

“What’s this!?”

“What do you mean? They’re stone. What, you’ve never seen Evil Eyes of Petrification before?”

I replied with a hint of sassiness and broke the petrified monsters with my spear. Then, I urged them on.

“Let’s hurry! Don’t just stand there dumbfounded!”

“This is the first time I’ve heard of Evil Eyes of Petrification!”

“Say it earlier if you have such an ability!”

I ran forward as I snickered at the party members who were touched by my ability. They gritted their teeth and followed suit. Whenever monsters appeared, I turned them to stone, and we marched forward as we broke them.

In the end, we covered 700 km in just one day. There was only 300 km left until our destination.

Chapter 188. Skill Synthesis (7)

“Shin oppa, here!”

“Thanks, Elfa.”

“Ehehe.”

A rabbit-eared beastman girl, Elfa, handed me a bowl of soup. I gave her head a pat and took a sip. It was a beef cream soup with an excellent taste. After all, I was the one who brought it! All hail instant food!

“How mysterious. Just putting some powder in water makes such flavor... Neither the Floor Shop nor the Residential Area has such items.”

“It’s expensive, so be thankful.”

“Ooh, as I thought, Crown Prince is really generous. These tiny bits of meat must be expensive too. I wonder what kind of meat it is...”

You might be curious what that meat is, but this hyung is worried for your future... I hesitated on whether to tell him the truth or not but seeing him so happy, I quietly took a spoonful of soup. Then, a light breeze blew next to me.

[Master, I came back from scouting.]

“Good work, Sharana.”

[The sky has really weird creatures. They look lifeless on the outside, but their brains have extremely active mana.]

“How many are there?”

[Close your eyes.]

When I did so, Sharana put her forehead against mine. With our extreme intimacy, she could transmit images to me with this.

“Crown Prince? What are you doing all of the sudden?”

“Shh.”

I put my finger on my lips and silenced Ren. Then, I closed my eyes and looked at the evening sky appearing in my sight. A star similar to Earth’s Sun was setting, dying the sky red, and a few clumps of clouds were scattered here and there. Filling up the sky was a countless number of winged creatures. Trying to count them was useless. I couldn’t help but sigh.

“Huu, there are so many...”

“You finally understand why we must travel through the mountains?”

“It’s quite overwhelming. Do you think there are other survivors?”

“I’m not sure... but I sure hope so.”

There was only one mountain range left until the plain. As there would be a rocky mountain in the middle, we would have no choice but to be completely exposed in this area.

“Once we get through the rocky mountain, The Forest of Tranquility will await us, a forest that was once a holy land. Here, the flow of mana becomes calm, making it hard to fight. More importantly, it becomes difficult to track someone using mana, so we won’t have to worry about pursuers from the rocky mountains.”

“Wouldn’t it be better to set up a base camp at Forest of Tranquility then?”

“The Forest of Tranquility is a holy land, but at the same time, it is also called a graveyard. It is fine to stay there for a day, but if you stay any longer, a grim reaper will come reap your life. It does not matter whether you are a human, beastman, or El Patiz. Staying in the holy land for more than a day would only hasten your death.”

There sure were strange places... I grumbled and unsummoned

Sharana. Then, I gulped down the soup. Then, I opened a canned coffee while I waited for the children to finish eating when Elfa and another beastman girl asked curiously.

“Oppa, what’s that?”

“Is it food?”

“It’s a beverage. You guys can drink it when you’re adults.”

“Really?”

“Of course.”

“I want to drink it now!”

“No, you won’t grow taller if you do.”

I quickly chugged down the coffee and crumpled the can before one of the children could reach it. Seeing me easily crumple the can with a mermaid drawn in a green circle, the children exclaimed in surprise. It seemed they were just curious. I told myself not to drink coffee in front of children.

“It’s only been a day, but they really are attached to Crown Prince.”

“Really.”

“Shin oppa is handsome!”

“He’s kind and strong!”

“He’s close to Wolf-nim.”

“But Ren oppa is still more handsome!”

To be honest, I thought I was more handsome than Ren, but seeing Ren’s happy expression, I stayed silent. If Ren came to Earth, I decided to call [Officer Podori](#).

After dinner, we set off again. Even in the dark environment, my Evil Eyes continued to petrify all monsters that attacked us. As I ran, I thought about ways to become stronger to better ensure everyone’s safety. Like in Luka continent, I couldn’t be sure what to expect in a foreign world.

I was, of course, talking about Skill Synthesis. Although the result was random, the result from the synthesized pocket watch skills was very satisfactory. It was definitely worth synthesizing skills that I didn’t use or skills that overlapped with others in use. I already had some candidates in mind.

“Crown Prince, we should set up camp here for the night. Once we get through here, we’ll be at the rocky mountain, where we won’t be able to stop to rest.”

“You’re right, let’s set up camp.”

With that, I took something out of my inventory and placed it down on the ground. Ren tilted his head.

“What’s this? A triangular, half-transparent giant crystal... Is it for some ritual?”

“Go in.”

“Go in? You can go in?”

“Wow, it’s so big!”

“Cozy! It’s so comfortable!”

The children fearlessly ran into the giant crystal. Right, this was none other than [Crystal Lair](#)! A high-tech camping tent that even worked underwater! It was large enough to fit 20 people and magically provided fresh water and bread infinitely! It was sitting in my inventory like a useless piece of junk, but I finally found the use for it!

“Ooooh! How revolutionary!”

“Wow, this would be perfect for staying overnight in the dungeon too.”

Everyone went inside and began to rest comfortably. As Crystal Lair even had an automatic alert system, it would wake us up when hostile beings neared it. If only it had wheels, it would be perfect!

“Crown Prince, aren’t you coming in?”

“I have something to do.”

I waved my hand and told them to rest. I walked a little ways away from the campsite. Lotte followed me to guard me.

“Skill Synthesis.”

When the circular stone slab suddenly appeared in the air, Lotte flinched and took a step backward. I smiled at her and touched Gale Track from my list of skills. Then, with a strange sensation, a small clump of light appeared in my hand. I placed it in the base skill slot and placed Blade Rush, a good single-target charge skill, into the supplement skill slot. I didn’t want to juggle with two separate charge skills and hoped that a skill that combined their good points would appear.

Of course, just combining them like this would be boring, so I added the Dash skill, which granted bonuses to my running movements. Feeling that it wasn’t enough, I even added Thunder Beast. The light flashing from the stone slab became brighter. My heart raced as I activated Skill Synthesis.

[You obtained the unique skill, Wind King's Rage.]

[With an unpredictable path and unfollowable speed, you charge forward, carrying a powerful lightning and wind power. When you collide with an enemy, a spear of lightning will appear and pierce through the enemy, after which a powerful wind will blow the enemy away. The enemy's mana will be absorbed, increasing the charge's destructive power by 10%. At any point, you can explode out with a powerful energy at a target. Currently, at level 1, the charge's destructive power can be increased up to 150%. As it is too powerful, after being fully charged, this skill cannot be used again for 3 hours. When uncharged, the skill can be used again after 10 minutes.]

[You created a unique skill! Unique skills are skills that possess strength on par with a God's powers without receiving the breath of a god! This grand achievement causes all gods to focus on you. Gods related to storm and lightning become especially interested. You obtained 3 skill points. Current skill points: 4]

“Good.”

As I had already created a unique skill before, I wasn't particularly surprised. Gale Track, Thunder Beast, and Blade Rush weren't ordinary skills. Dash couldn't be ignored either.

In any case, I was happy with the result. Just like I wanted, I would be able to use this skill regardless of whether I was facing

one target or multiple targets.

Surprisingly, this skill didn't have ranks like Thunder Beast, Dimensional Travel, and Peruta Circuit. In such cases, it was much harder to raise the skill level, but each level would show a sharp increase in power. It was a skill that had surpassed the notion of being ranked. It made me feel especially giddy.

“Alright, that's enough rejoicing... Skill Synthesis.”

This time, I used White Lightning Consecutive Strike as the base skill and put Thunder Tempest into the supplement skill slot. I didn't put other skills in this time as it would be too wasteful to put any of my remaining skills in to supplement an attack skill.

[You obtained the skill, 'Lightning Spear Storm.']

[With a powerful whirlpool of lightning, you draw in nearby enemies, striking out consecutively with a white lightning-imbued spear. Each strike uses 0.1% of your mana, and the final strike uses 10% of your mana to deal a powerful explosive lightning damage to all enemies.]

Although I didn't get another unique skill, it became what I designated a 'master skill.' The skill was more than what I expected. Peruta Circuit certainly had such an ability. Now, I was able to draw in nearby enemies near me! It seemed like a skill that would appear in games, but I decided to ignore it.

“Alright, next...”

To realize a skill I had thought of before coming to this world, I picked a few skills. This was also the reason I decided to wait until night to use Skill Synthesis.

However, once I placed all the skills in the stone slab's slots, I canceled Skill Synthesis.

“... It's not enough.”

If I continued, I felt that I wouldn't get the skill I wanted. Perhaps it was the effect of Spirit of the Mixer, or perhaps, it was just a warrior's intuition. Regardless, I felt that it wasn't wise to synthesize the skill. Of course, before I regretted it, I would have to decide before I finished crossing the mountain range. I shrugged and went back to the tent with Lotte. It would take more energy to climb the rocky mountain. I had to get rest when I could.

However, what we faced the next day wasn't the aerial unit of El Patiz, but a completely unexpected massive, terrifying enemy.

Translator's note:

I thought the Skill Synthesis stone slab was rectangular (as slabs generally are), but apparently, it was circular! My imagery!!!

I hope everyone understands the Wind King's Rage skill. The word "charge" is used in two meaning there – one as in "to rush forward" and another as in "to collect energy over time."

The police mascot in Korea.

A reward Shin got in [chapter 153](#)

Chapter 189. Absolute Soul (1)

Before we left the forest, Ren reminded the children.

“Just close your eyes, and we’ll take care of everything.”

“Ren oppa.”

“If Oppa gets hurt, I’ll hate you!”

“Hyung, protect Ren!”

“Don’t worry, I’m not so weak that I need someone’s protection.”

“Guys, get on Lotte first.”

I made the children switch to Lotte. She was, of course, back in her wyvern form. Ren and Lebuik also got on her back. To protect them, I flew up using Sharana’s power and Talaria. Lotte flapped her wings and complained.

[I hate having people other than Hero ride me...]

“Sorry for making you do this all the time, Lotte.”

[Hero must pay the price for hurting this Dark Wing Lotte’s pride. Be prepared, Hero.]

“Sure, I’ll do anything you want if it’s within my power.”

[Kuhum... Then I’ll let it slide this time.]

I patted Lotte’s head and appeased her. The children stayed still watching Lotte and I talk, but Ren and Lebuik strangely looked at Lotte’s body jealously.

“I wish I had a wyvern like this too.”

“She really was a wyvern... I’ve never seen such a large and powerful wyvern before. I can’t believe she’s the frail looking woman from before... Do Crown Prince’s pets and elementals all have female human forms?”

“I don’t really know.. Maybe, it’s the will of the universe.”

I replied with a shrug. Then, I transformed my choker into its spear form. We would soon leave the forest. Knowing that this was the last chance to catch us, the hungry forest monsters were closing in on us from all sides.

“Everyone, get ready! We’re going to leave the forest with a final bang! Ruyue!”

[Freezing Air!]

The energy emitted by the materialized Ruyue froze everything in our vicinity. At the same time, I shot out the energy gathered at the tip of my spear. Monsters that tried to make us their food became frozen food themselves. Then, unable to withstand the aura I shot out, they shattered along with dozens of trees behind them. Morning sunlight shone down from above. We were now out of the forest.

At the same time, countless number of monsters in the air caught sight of us. They were the monsters being controlled by the brain worms. It was hard to describe just how many there were. They probably could not even be counted by the thousands. The sky was practically filled with them.

“There are too many of them!”

“I’ll take care of it!”

I soared up and activated my Evil Eyes. With the sheer number of them, my eyes began to hurt and mana continuously drained. However, the result was more than I imagined. Almost 80 percent of the aerial army petrified and fell. It was almost as if there was a meteor shower going on. I finally began to understand why Evil Eye holders were so feared.

The Evil Eyes of Petrification were specialized for fighting large armies. It was a weapon of mass murder capable of decimating all who could not withstand its power! My Evil Eyes continued to shine, and the enemy forces continued to dwindle.

“Crown Prince...!”

“Wow, Shin oppa is so cool...”

“I want to marry Shin oppa!”

“I want to learn how to do that, Hyung! Teach me!”

“T-Teach me too!”

I cleaned up some of the monsters that survived because they were blind and charged through the air. Lotte followed me with a speed that wouldn't lose out in the slightest and killed the approaching monsters with her black flames.

A short while later, the monsters' movements became strange. Behind one large flying monster, dozens of smaller monsters lined up like train compartments. I somewhat understood their intentions. After realizing that looking at my eyes would petrify them, they hid themselves behind a scapegoat. It was something humans would think of, not monsters.

[Kiaaaaaaaaaak!]

[Kugaaaaaaaaak!]

They screamed joyfully thinking that they found the solution. I smirked and shot out a whirlpool from my spear. The monster in

the front, which had already turned to stone, were covering the dozens of monsters behind it. However, the whirlpool easily tore through the petrified monster. The monsters hiding behind it immediately turned to stone and fell.

Just like that, thousands of monsters died once again. If I were a character in a RPG game, my level would have risen explosively.

“This rocky mountain is too tall! When will we see the Forest of Tranquility?”

“Forest of Tranquility is located at the highest region of Panan continent! Naturally, this mountain range is also the highest!”

Still, we couldn't see the peak after flying for 5 minutes. That was just too high! I heard that Earth's mountains were still growing. I was afraid they'd become like Panan continent's mountains.

[Kiaaaaa!]

The higher we went, the more violently the monsters attacked. It was undoubtedly because they knew they would not be able to touch us once we reached the Forest of Tranquility. Hundreds of monsters were turning into stone every second, but more and more monsters flocked from god knows where. Perhaps, they wanted to kill us by drowning us in stone!

I clicked my tongue and took out a Mana Potion. I put the potion in my mouth and called elementals to my spear.

[Ah, a different world!]

[Ek, bugs!]

[We're scolding bugs today?]

[There are so many!]

[Prince-nim became even cooler!]

[Spin spin~]

“Ah, that technique is...”

“So many elementals...”

Mad Typhoon's powerful rotational force seemed to have excited the elementals, as they shone even brighter than usual. I heightened the rotational force and led the elementals. Petrifying the monsters coming to stop it, I very slightly pulled back the spear enveloped by the elemental whirlpool.

“Elemental...”

“A-Amazing...”

Tempest!”

A gale of elementals stormed through the air. Meanwhile, I gulped down the Mana Potion in my mouth. Looking at the gaping hole in the sky, I smiled with satisfaction.

“Alright, let’s hurry! Hold on tightly, guys! Lotte, full speed!”

[Understood, Hero!]

After sweeping away a large number of enemies with Elemental Tempest, I cleaned up the rest with my Evil Eyes. We were then able to climb to the peak without much trouble. After about 5 minutes, we finally entered the Forest of Tranquility.

The inside of the forest was extremely beautiful. Countless beautiful flowers and tall trees filled the lush forest. Even in this world, where everything was being controlled by the brain worms, this place maintained its natural beauty. However, just like its name suggested, it was unnaturally quiet. There were no signs of animals. It was as if we were the only ones breathing in this place.

“Cough, cough.”

“Huu...”

The highland’s thin oxygen level made it hard for the children to breathe. Even the ones who had mana found breathing difficult.

“It’s hard to breathe. I’m tired.”

“Use the mana breathing method, Elfa. You learned it, right?”

“Un, Daddy taught me.”

There were many different mana cultivation methods, but the most common were mana breathing methods, which took in mana by a special method of breathing. Ren used this method as well as the children that followed him. The children seemed to have remembered about the mana breathing method after I mentioned it, as they all started to use it. I patted their heads and looked around.

“How can there be such a lush forest so high?”

“That is something only God knows. But as Crown Prince can probably feel, mana is bountiful in this area. If the greenery here sprouted with the power of mana, it’s understandable.”

He was right. Using common sense from Earth to evaluate Panan continent was foolish. In fact, it wouldn’t be long until Earth’s common sense would change.

“Let’s hurry. You said we can’t stay here for more than a day.”

“Yes, no one could stay here for over a day.”

“Guys, it might be tiring, but endure it.”

“Un.”

“It’s okay since Shin oppa is here.”

“Elfa... You seem to like Crown Prince more than me...”

Don’t make that face like you were just thrown away by your wife, Ren! I almost called the police! Be thankful there are no police here!

However, not long afterwards, I tilted my head.

“Ren, you might feel wronged, but can you not glare at me?”

“No, I’m not looking at Crown Prince.”

“Is it Lebuik then?”

“Why would I be looking at you? I’m too busy inscribing Ren-nim’s visage in my retina.”

She sure talked well for someone who abandoned Ren... I guess, she proved her love for him by coming back.

Then who was it? I looked at the children sitting on top of Ruyue and tilted my head. A few of them also tilted their heads after seeing me. They really were too cute.

Soon after, however, they began to writhe in pain.

“I can’t... breathe.”

“Elfa?”

“Hyung, I can’t either...”

“Demi!”

Ren and I became flustered and checked on the children. They looked like they were suffocating. I expanded my mana outwards and scanned the children. Then, I realized that the children’s mana... were leaving them.

“Crown Prince!”

“Damn... Ren, mana is leaving everyone’s bodies!”

I quickly circulated Peruta Circuit at its limit. The mana leaving my body flowed backwards and back into me, but the others couldn’t do the same thing with their mana breathing method. Damn, Ren, Lebuik, and I would be fine, but if the children’s mana all left...!

Then, the forest shook violently.

[Arrogant human! You dare disturb my meal!]

“Ren, didn’t you say it was fine to stay for a day!”

“The last person who crossed this forest did it 130 years ago! The forest’s grim reaper must have changed his mind!”

“Or, maybe he doesn’t like it that Rookie took back his mana. He said Rookie disturbed his meal.”

“How can you say that so calmly!?”

“Well...”

Lebuik pointed at the two large eyes staring at us from beyond the dense trees.

“I got feared, so actually, it’s hard to even talk.”

At that moment, a shocking message rang out to everyone.

[An Event Raid has broken out! SSS+-rank 50-man, ‘Mana Eater.’ Because you were at the location of the raid boss, you

will be forced to participate!]

Author's note:

Shin's first SSS rank Event Raid! Can he do it!?

Chapter 190. Absolute Soul (2)

The creature's presence was powerful enough to make every hair on my body stand on end. It was perhaps about 20 meters tall. For a raid boss, it wasn't particularly big, but its amorphous mana armor and large eyes shining ominously seemed to take away people's willingness to resist. Almost like malformed arms and legs, dozens of long and half-transparent tentacle-like things were squirming around its body.

[Your mana... seems especially tasty...!]

“Where did this monster come from!? Ren, you should've said something!”

“Kuk! I didn't know either... Rather than that, how can Crown Prince move perfectly fine...!?”

“Lebuik! You too!?”

“Like I said, I got feared!”

Damn, did I have to use it now? Seeing the tentacles closing in on us and the two large eyes of the Mana Eater shining ominously, I gritted my teeth and shouted.

“Kuaaaaaang!”

[You used Frozen Roar! All enemies in the battlefield freeze in place. All allies temporarily become super-armored and all abilities are increased by 50%. Your chance of landing critical hits doubles when fighting enemies affected by Frozen Roar.]

In an instant, the Mana Eater's movements froze. Frozen Roar had affected both its body and its tentacles. However, the Mana Eater was not an SSS rank raid boss monster for nothing. It was already trying to shake off Frozen Roar's effect. I had to move now!

“Ren, protect the children!”

“Got it!”

“Lotte!”

[Ride, Hero!]

Lotte transformed into her wyvern form and I quickly jumped onto her back. The dense forest made it extremely difficult for Lotte to fly. As such, I used Tempest and cleared the trees around us.

[I won't let you disturb my meal!]

“Annoying!”

Tentacles flew toward me from all sides. The thick and long

tentacles oozed out disgusting black mana.

I enveloped my spear with chaos flames and ordered Lotte to charge toward one tentacle. I raised my spear up with vigor and struck down. Then, with an immense resistance, I felt my mana being sucked in.

[Kuhaha, truly tasty... Kuk!]

At the same time it happily remarked on the taste of my mana, it screamed. As I thought, chaos flames worked on an SSS rank raid boss too! I smiled in relief and shot my spear at another tentacle. I wanted to sever it completely!

“Crown Prince, be careful! He doesn’t just have one or two tentacles!”

“Don’t mind me! Focus on protecting the children!”

The children had to use mana just to be in this place. I wasn’t sure if I could win against the Mana Eater in a direct one on one fight, much less with the added condition that I had to do it before the children completely ran out of mana!

I shot chaos flame Tempests towards two tentacles flying toward me from behind. Afraid of the chaos flames, the tentacles instinctively backed off, and I used this chance to escape from the tentacles with Lotte.

[T-This flame... A mana I can't completely absorb... Who are you!?]

“I’m a Hero that will end your life, you damned octopus!”

[Try it!]

Dozens of tentacles instantly shot up into the air. The Mana Eater seemed to have shaken off the frost covering it completely. Plus, it did so by absorbing the mana used in the attack. My instincts told me that using chaos flames was the best way to damage it.

“Lotte, can you do it?”

[Of course.]

Lotte’s reliable retort cheered me up. Lotte flapped her wings valiantly, shooting out waves of aura from the edges of her wings. The waves of aura then fell the nearby trees and created, even more, space for her to maneuver around.

A few of the tentacles then grabbed some of the trees that fell and threw it at us. I received them with chaos flame aura and shouted.

“Lotte, I’m going to use Gaia Buster!”

[Got it!]

The moment she heard my words, Lotte flapped her wings strongly. With each flap of her wings, she flew higher at an incredible speed.

[You can't escape!]

Along with the Mana Eater's shout, its tentacles shot up into the air towards Lotte. It seemed it wanted to fight with just its tentacles.

With how tall the trees were, even though I thought we had flown up high, I could still see trees all around us. Because we knocked down the trees around us, there was no problem with Lotte moving around, but the trees here were still too strange. Feeling somewhat uneasy, I bit my lips.

“It's on the tip of my tongue...”

[Tongue?]

“Let's descend for now!”

The moment she heard me, Lotte shot down like an arrow. A few tentacles attacked us. It was impossible to dodge them all!

I expanded Mad Typhoon's range as much as I could and created a whirlpool surrounding Lotte and me. Then, I wrapped it with chaos flames. The tentacles hurling toward us didn't seem to mind and fell down after hitting us once. Even so, their attacks had

carried an immense force. More importantly, they were stealing our mana every time they hit us!

“Lotte, are you okay?”

[This is nothing! Rather than that, we’re almost back down on the ground!]

“Got it!”

I raised my spear. A single tentacle left a heavy injury on my cheek, then fell back from chaos flames. Furthermore, dozens of tentacles had joined together to form a hammer-like arm, as if to prevent us from doing what we wanted.

[I’ll suck your mana dry!]

“Lotte, dodge!”

[No problem!]

The tentacle hammer smashed down toward us without warning. As for its size, it was several times bigger than Lotte!

“Shin oppa!”

“Crown Prince, be careful!”

[Kuaaaang!]

Lotte roared and flapped her wings weakly. The mana contained within that flap was overly complex for what a monster could have, but I already realized that we were now only a few meters away from the ground. Dear god, Lotte just used Blink!

[Hero!]

“Gaia Buster!”

After Lotte successfully dodged the tentacle hammer with Blink, her shout snapped me out of my shock. I immediately struck my spear wrapped in black lightning into the ground. At that moment, the tentacles, which had separated from the hammer form and were hurling toward us once again, were all thrown back. The ground exploded and large boulders had shot out. Furthermore, the trees that had their roots in the ground were pulled out along with their roots.

“Protect the children!”

“I know!”

Boulders carrying black lightning clashed with tentacles. The Mana Eater screamed and squirmed its tentacles, but even an SSS rank boss monster couldn't help but be paralyzed after being from repeatedly being hit by the boulders. However, even after

successfully dealing an attack, I couldn't relax. I could tell that the Mana Eater's boundless mana hadn't decreased in the slightest!

[Kuhaaaa...!]

The change occurred the moment Gaia Buster ended. Black sticky black mana began to spread out in all directions, forming a thick fog that made it hard to see. Even with my eyes that had far surpassed the limits of human eyes, I could not see through the fog.

[You are the first human to injure me... You must pay for this humiliation!]

I could feel its tentacles getting farther away. On the other hand, its killing intent shot up to a peak. This only meant one thing.

[I'll eat the others first! You will have to face me alone!]

“You bastard!”

[Hero, his presence is continuously changing location! If we rashly attack...!]

“I know... Ren, Lebuik!”

“I can't die when I've come so far!”

“Before you take Ren-nim’s life, you’ll... you’ll have to take mine!”

The tentacles had already begun their attack on the others. I didn’t think that Ren and Lebuik would lose, but if even a single tentacle reached the children... I urgently materialized Sharana.

“Take away this fog!”

[Ek, what an unpleasant fog. Master, I’ll get right on it!]

Once materialized, Sharana was truly powerful. As the elemental storm she wielded pushed back the Mana Eater’s fog, I gulped down a highest-grade Mana Potion. The amount of mana I had used and had been absorbed by the Mana Eater was no joke.

[Kuhaha! Beastmen, how impudent!]

“Lebuik, be careful!”

“I won’t let you hurt Ren-nim!”

The fog dissipated, and I could see once again. With Lotte, I quickly charged toward Ren, Lebuik, Ruyue, and the children. At the same time, I summoned Peika and infused her into my spear.

“Die! Lightning Spear Storm!”

A powerful whirlpool erupted from my spear and attracted the tentacles that were aiming for the children. In addition, the Mana Eater's body was slowly being pulled toward me. It seemed to have realized my skill's power as it joined its tentacles together to form a hammer once more.

[Let's see if you can take this!]

“Try it!”

The spear I shot out consecutively stabbed into the tentacles and discharged powerful electricity. Even so, the tentacle hammer didn't waver in the slightest and slammed down on me from above. Regardless, I had successfully taken the tentacles away from the children.

“Ruyue, take the children and run! Ren, Lebuik, go on ahead! I'll go after I take care of this guy!”

“I can't!”

[No!]

“Protect the children! Ruyue, listen to me! Everyone here is just getting in my way!”

“Rookie, how can you win against that thing by yourself!?”

“Like I said, all of you are just burdens!”

The moment the hammer slammed down on my head, Lotte used Blink and dodged it. Because of it, Lightning Spear Storm was interrupted, and the tentacles freed themselves from the whirlpool. Seeing the tentacles aim for the children once more, I gritted my teeth. They really didn't know when to stop!

“Peika, Sharana! I need a big one!”

[Why with this wind woman... But since it's Master's request, it can't be helped.]

[Worm-ssi, hurry up and attack! I'll strengthen it!]

Peika left the spear for a moment and raised her hand. The entire forest was instantly brightened and all the trees burnt up. Sharana also raised her hand and strengthened Peika's attack, after which the dozens of tentacles hurling towards the children were obliterated.

[Kuaaaaaaaa!]

“Well done! Ruyue, run! Lotte, let's run too!”

[Understood!]

The children were already in trouble! Ren and Lebuik gritted

their teeth and smacked away a couple of tentacles near them. Along with Ruyue, they then began to run.

[Kuhaha, foolish! You can't escape from here!]

Just when I thought Ruyue had escaped the tentacles' range, two thick tentacles sprung up from the ground in front of her! Flustered, I urged Lotte to use Blink. At that moment...

[I've been waiting!]

“Kuk!?”

With a blunt sound, my chest plate shattered. Feeling vision shaking for a moment, I closed my eyes and opened them.

Five tentacles had skewered through my chest.

“H-How...!”

[You still don't understand!?!]

The Mana Eater shouted triumphantly. I could hear its voice from all sides. I raised my head and was amazed when I saw that the tentacles piercing through me had sprung up from the trees above. Right, the thought that had almost crossed my mind before was...

[This entire forest is me! Foolish Human!]

It was the start of a nightmare.

Chapter 191. Absolute Soul (3)

“Crown Prince!”

“Shin oppa, don’t die!”

“Tsk...!”

As I lost too much blood in a short period of time, dizziness swept over me. I felt like I would scream if I opened my mouth, so I clenched my teeth and grabbed the tentacles poking through my chest. I then burnt the tentacles with the strongest lightning power I could muster and activated my ring’s regeneration ability. I had to regenerate my chest area.

[Diehard activates! Your HP is recovered to 50%!]

It seemed my HP had fallen to a dangerous level as Diehard activated and filled up my HP. That was dangerous. I almost died. Just by looking at Ren’s expression, I could tell the grave situation I was in. I burnt the tentacles flying towards me with a spear attack and drank an HP Potion.

[You!]

Seeing that I had recovered from my injuries, the Mana Eater sounded shocked. I smirked and put my middle finger up, but in

truth, I was still at a disadvantage. Regeneration could only be used once every 2 weeks, and Diehard could only be used once a day. In other words, if the same thing happened again, I would die. And what was that just now!? It pierced through my Epic-grade armor and put me on the brink of death! Although the Mana Eater must have carefully planned the attack, it was entirely possible that it still had more cards up its sleeve. I was doubtful that that was his trump card attack.

An attack that increased its attack power by eating the opponent's mana and decreased the opponent's defense. That was why the Mana Eater was so feared

[Y-You dare hurt my Hero...!]

While I contemplated on how to defeat the Mana Eater's attack, Lotte said something with rage and trembled. I could feel the mana in her body surging up.

[You must pay the price!]

Lotte breathed out fierce flames. The trees around us with the tentacles hanging from them were devoured by Lotte's black flames. Her flames, which carried a powerful curse, quickly spread and set other trees on fire.

[This isn't an ordinary flame... I'll kill you first!]

“You bastard!”

Chaos flames formed a whirlpool using Mad Typhoon. As the whirlpool undulated around me, I came to a decision. I poured a large amount of mana into my spear and shouted.

“Everyone, get on Lotte!”

“What!?”

“Hold out in the air for a moment! I’ll take care of him during that time!”

“What are you talking about? Take care of him how!? And why should we—”

I jumped down from Lotte’s back and shouted.

“This forest is dangerous! Much more than fighting the damned aerial army! So listen to me!”

“What about you!?”

Naturally, I had my methods. I didn’t have the time to leisurely explain everything. Pushing away the tentacles with chaos flames, I ordered Lotte and Ruyue.

“Protect the others. I’ll finish it soon.”

[Hero, I want to end him!]

[Shin, this place is dangerous!]

“But this is the best method.”

In truth, using Deific Manifestation and getting Peruta’s help was the best way of dealing with this situation. However, if I faced the worst-case possible scenario I envisioned, I wouldn’t have a way out. As long as other methods were available to me, I had to try them first.

[I won’t let them escape!]

“You’ll have to!”

I heightened my Mana Detection and used chaos flame Tempests to hit away the tentacles attacking my companions. At the same time, I glared at the others who were still hesitant on getting on Lotte. I was signaling them to hurry.

“In that case, Crown Prince, I’ll stay too!”

“I knew you’d say that. Unfortunately, you’re a burden! Just protect the children! If you have Mana Potions that aren’t from the Floor Shop, give them to the children to drink!”

I turned down Ren bluntly. Lebuik was more sensible than Ren, as she was already moving the children to Lotte's back. Ren seemed to want to say something, but he soon followed Lebuik with a look of resignation.

I formed more chaos flames as I anxiously waited for them to go. I didn't have much mana left. I was constantly using mana to maintain the materialized elementals and form chaos flames; not to mention, the Mana Eater kept stealing some away! My mana... Wait.

“If I remember correctly, Deathblood Ring's effect was...”

On attack, 2% chance to absorb 10% of enemy's mana, and with 1% chance, using 5% of my HP to place the enemy under blood contamination status effect. As I had almost only seen the effect on ordinary trash monsters, the effect had never really felt impactful. However, it was different now.

“Huu... let's try it.”

I was certain that the Mana Eater had at least ten times the mana I had. In other words, absorbing 10% of its mana meant recovering my mana entirely. I raised my spear. I didn't need to target anything specific. This entire forest was the Mana Eater. I breathed in, then shouted the skill I needed desperately.

“Divine Speed!”

[No matter what you do, it's usele—"]

"Haaaaaap!"

I focused entirely on stabbing consecutively. Although I had to use 10% of my remaining mana, my speed became 1000% for 3 seconds! During that time, if I gave up on destructive force and focused solely on numbers, I could attack at least 100 times.

I stabbed the ground like a madman. Not even using a jackhammer would make such a sound. Once the Mana Eater noticed my strange actions, it gave up chasing the others and aimed toward me with all of its tentacles. I ignored them. Unlike last time, I had an insurance!

[Bulwark of Wind! Master, it won't last long!]

"I just need 3 seconds!"

Because of how quickly I talked, she might not have understood. In any case, when was this mana absorption thing going to happen!? Don't tell me it won't work because Deathblood Ring's grade is too low!?

I stabbed the ground repeatedly, resolving to steal the Mana Eater's mana. A large hole was dug through and the trees around me fell. At the same time, the tentacles buried under the ground became shredded.

[Deathblood activates, taking 10% of the enemy's mana.]

[Kuuuak!]

At that moment, something completely unexpected happened. The tentacles flying toward me deflated like a balloon out of air. Not only that, the trees in the area lost their vitality and looked as if they'd been rotting for 100 years. Of course, the intended effect was still there. My mana had gone back up to full!

“Don't tell me, is mana this bastard's entire life force?”

Well, it was a monster that freely stole mana, so in that sense, it wasn't all that surprising! Unexpectedly, stealing its mana with Deathblood had dealt more damage than all the attacks I had done combined!

Feeling my body overflowing with mana, I immediately materialized Sharana. The Mana Eater's rage became focused on me.

[Youuuu! M-My mana, you dare take my mana!]

“Don't be so stingy, you bastard. You drilled holes in my chest!”

Ten times. If I stole its mana ten times, it would die. The moment I pulled my spear out of the ground, the ground exploded and

dozens of tentacles shot toward me. With materialized Sharana's overwhelming power of wind, I blew them away. Even so, it would be hard to leisurely strike as I did previously.

[Return my mana!]

“Thanks for the meal, you bastard! Sharana, stir up wind in the entire forest!”

When I gave Sharana almost half the mana I took from the Mana Eater, her body gave off a dazzling light. The wind blowing around us became fiercer, and the Mana Eater's tentacles became like rice plants pained by a storm. Meanwhile, everyone riding on Ruyue had successfully switched to Lotte.

[Hero, if Hero becomes unable to pay my reward, this Dark Wing Lotte will drag Hero out of his grave! Hurry up and end him!]

[Shin, I'll go back for a bit!]

After safely completing her mission, Ruyue returned to Fairy Garden. At the same time, Lotte cheered me on and soared up into the sky. The Mana Eater didn't forget to send some tentacles their way even while he was focused on me, but Ren and Lebuik pushed away the tentacles with their aura attacks. The trees blocking their way out of the forest were also cut down.

“If Crown Prince doesn't come quick, we'll come back. So hurry!”

“Just focus on getting out!”

“Oppa, don’t die!”

Before they left the forest, Ren and the others shouted at the top of their lungs. Even so, they wouldn’t be safe just by leaving the forest. Outside of the forest was the aerial army of the El Patiz. Though Lotte, Ren, and Lebuik were surely able to hold their ground, I still had to finish the Mana Eater as soon as possible.

After confirming that the others left the forest, I let out a sigh of relief. Of course, the Mana Eater’s tentacles were still slashing across my face and leaving injuries.

[I’ll blow a hole in your chest again! Let’s see if you can regenerate again!]

“Sharana, make my voice ring out in the entire forest!”

[No problem!]

It wouldn’t make sense if a wind elemental like Sharana was unable to amplify my voice, especially when she was materialized. Along with her answer, my voice indeed rang out sonorously whenever I talked. With the Evil Eyes and Soul Guard, I had increased my soul’s league. I had also constantly increased my strength in other areas. Now, just my voice carried a certain level of power, which seemed to be able to impact the Mana Eater, albeit only slightly.

[Noisy brat! I won't let you fool around with wind!]

“Now, Sharana! Dematerialize and go back!”

[Yes!]

Sharana's immediately returned to the Spirit World the moment I gave the order. Her elemental magic was still in effect. I had to finish it before it ended.

[Become my food, Human!]

“Buuuuuurn!”

[You used Crimson Roar. Everything blazes as flames.]

In an instant, my entire view became filled with flames. Amplified by Sharana's wind, my voice, which reached every corner of the forest, turned into flames and burnt everything. Other than the crackling sound of the fire, only the Mana Eater's scream rang out.

[Kuaaaaaaaaa!]

Its tentacles flew toward me, but they became scorched and crumbled. The entire world was dyed red. I used Divine Speed once again and struck the ground crazily. Before Crimson Roar's effect

ran out, I trusted that I would be able to steal its mana again.

[Y-You... T-This flame!]

“Shut it!”

[Deathblood activates, using 5% of your HP to inject contaminated blood into the enemy! The Mana Eater fell under the ‘blood contamination’ status effect! Its attack power and movement speed decreases, and it loses mana continuously! This effect cannot be dispelled unless the target dies!]

Oh, a different effect? As it continuously drained the Mana Eater’s mana, it was excellent against the Mana Eater. However, as I wanted to refill my mana, I couldn’t help but be disappointed. The flames covering the forest were beginning to disappear.

[The forest I grew for hundreds of years... I-It has been burnt... by a mere human!]

What was once a dense forest was now entirely scorched to ashes. Protruding out of the black ground, the Mana Eater’s circular body and its dozens of tentacles caught my attention. Half of the tentacles were still burrowed.

“I can finally see.”

I raised my head and looked up at the sky. At the same time, a few boulders fell down. They were the monsters that had been flying in the air. Even though we cleaned up a lot of them before, they had already increased in numbers during the time we stayed in the Forest of Tranquility. I could also see Ren and Lebuik fighting on top of Lotte. Thankfully, the children seemed to be doing well.

[Kahak! I'll kill you!]

Thanks to the blood contamination effect, the Mana Eater was slower than before. Even so, its tentacles were still fast and powerful. Seeing them shooting toward me, I summoned Sharana and infused her in my body. Now that I knew the Mana Eater could spring up tentacles from the ground, it wasn't wise to fight on ground.

However, almost as if it seemed to be waiting for me to fly, the Mana Eater's tentacles changed direction. It was aiming at the sky.

“Damn!”

Was it trying to attack the others again!? I raised my voice to warn them. However, it was in vain. The Mana Eater's target weren't my companions.

[Mana, give me your mana!]

[Guaaaaaa!]

[Kiaaaaa!]

The tentacles danced and pierced through a countless number of monsters. Surprisingly, the moment the tentacles sucked up the monsters' mana, they absorbed the brain worms' mana and killed them effortlessly. I understood why the brain worms had left the Forest of Tranquility alone.

“Wait, now isn't the time to be surprised!”

I quickly charged through the air. However, the Mana Eater was continuously recovering mana and regaining its vitality. The number of tentacles attacking me increased as well. As more tentacles sprung up, they pierced through more monsters in the air and created more tentacles. Evil Eyes were indeed good for fighting against a large army, but the Mana Eater was miles ahead of me! As long as there were monsters it could feed on, it would never run out of steam!

At the same time, the increased number of tentacles attacking me made it hard for me to block them all. The distance between us wasn't something that could be covered by one or two Divine Speed. In the end, I gritted my teeth and used another skill.

“Gigant Time! Prepare to die!”

[No one can threaten my lif— kuk!]

It wasn't my spear. The spear enlarged to dozens of meters by Gigant Time was only used to slash away dozens of tentacles attacking me. Then who was it? I burnt away the tentacles blocking my vision and looked forward. The Mana Eater's circular body, which was protruding out of the ground like a flower bud, had two horns piercing through it.

Two horns, is that...?

“Good, note late. I came to help.”

In the air, a 7 meter drake was flapping its wings. A relatively small drake that possessed immense strength. As I could tell that it was undead, there was only one answer as to its identity. As if to wash away any doubt I might have, a beautiful woman carrying a chain whip stood up above the drake, flashing her red eyes. Flowing ash-grey hair and a beret shining like a gemstone. There was no doubt.

[Guooooo!]

A large undead rhinoceros beetle stabbed its horns deeper into the Mana Eater and roared. The Mana Eater screamed in pain and attacked the rhinoceros beetle with its tentacles. However, seemingly from a special buff, the rhinoceros beetle's carapace could not be penetrated.

“Loro, nice. Cool.”

“Really! Can’t you give it a cooler name, Daisy!?”

Right, Revival’s newest member, Daisy, had come as reinforcement.

Chapter 192. Absolute Soul (4)

[Kugyyyyyya!]

“Loro, finish him.”

[Kuaaaaa!]

The rhinoceros beetle waved its two horns and tormented the Mana Eater. At the same time, the Mana Eater's tentacles began to slowly melt the rhinoceros beetle's carapace. Daisy's expression changed.

“W-What is that? Loro's carapace, can't be melted by physical attacks.”

“Didn't you get the raid message!? It's a Mana Eater! M.A.N.A.E.A.T.E.R.! It's eating the mana strengthening Loro's carapace!”

“Why fight against this crazy monster?”

“Because we can't run! Tell me if you know anything about it!”

“Extract all mana. Otherwise, won't die.”

Her confidence from when she first appeared disappeared and she looked a bit nervous.

“No matter how the outside, looks hurt, if mana is left... it regenerates. It's, not an organism.”

“So it's constantly using mana to regenerate its body? That means, if we can't deplete its mana, there's no way to defeat it.”

“Smart. Good student... Looks like, I'll have to go all out.”

With that, Daisy flashed her Evil Eyes. Countless number of monsters began to appear in the air. They were all monsters I sold to her. Other than the drake that she was riding on and the rhinoceros beetle that was attacking the Mana Eater, the Cyclops Lord, Mantis Queen, and all sorts of monsters from the Insect World showed themselves as undead monsters.

“You can control all of them at the same time?”

“I'm Hero successor candidate. Very amazing.”

Well, if she wasn't that strong, the empire behind the Desert Scorpion's guild master wouldn't have gone so far to obtain her... It was just that their method wasn't the best. Since I could accept Daisy into my guild thanks to that, perhaps I should be thanking them. If they were still alive in that ruined world when I visited, I needed to repay them. With Mad Typhoon.

The monsters, which had appeared above what had now become a vacant lot, changed their positions whenever Daisy flashed her

Evil Eyes. It was then that I understood how Daisy was using her Evil Eyes' power. Her Evil Eyes allowed her to read others' thoughts and even transmit her own thoughts to them. Using this ability, she commanded her undead army quickly and efficiently, exactly as she wished.

Undead monsters under necromancy followed the orders of their master word by word. In other words, no matter how outstanding they were, they would not be able to display their full potential if the necromancer controlling them were inadequate. As I'd never seen other necromancers, I couldn't say how skilled Daisy was as a commander, but it was fairly obvious.

All of Daisy's undead monsters were moving as if they were alive, severing, biting, and burning the Mana Eater's tentacles. They struck at the Mana Eater's body, prevented the tentacles from attacking Daisy and me, and even snatched the monsters in the air to prevent the Mana Eater from recovering mana! Daisy's army was doing all these with ease.

“Daisy, you really are amazing..!”

“Now, show me, Kang Shin's power. Looking forward to, guild master's strength.”

She's trying to order me around now too, eh? Seeing Daisy swing her whip around on the drake, I snorted and raised my spear. Even if she didn't say anything, I would have done it anyways! I charged straight toward the Mana Eater as I called my elementals.

“Ruyue, Sharana!”

[Un!]

[I’m ready!]

“Peika, materialize!”

[Okay, Master!]

The three elementals flew next to me energetically. Peika had materialized in her dragon form and was emitting her aura wildly.

“Prevent that guy from touching me! Ruyue, stop the tentacles with ice! Sharana, power up Ruyue! Peika, try to paralyze the Mana Eater as much as you can!”

[Don’t worry, my lightning is a lightning that can even burn mana!]

Peika shouted a somewhat familiar line, after which thick bolts of lightning struck the Mana Eater’s body. The damage taken by the Mana Eater was greater than the mana he absorbed from the lightning. As a result, its body became slightly scorched, and the tentacles’ grip on Loro became loose.

[Guaaaang!]

[Get away from me with this rotting stench!]

“That’s why I’m going instead, you son of a bitch!”

The tentacles flying toward us became frozen by Ruyue’s empowered freezing energy, then shattered. The same happened to the tentacles springing up from the ground. Having all three elementals attacking and having Peika materialized made my mana drop by 1% a second, but I already knew how to replenish my mana.

[You think I’ll let you!]

“I think so?”

“Obliterate!”

[Kiaaaaaaaaaa!]

Daisy’s shout caused her undead army to let out strange screams and attack the tentacles even more enthusiastically. Meanwhile, Peika took more of my mana and hurled spears of lightning at the Mana Eater’s body. I then jumped on top of its body, and held up my enlarged spear, as if to hurl it toward him.

“Divine Speed!”

‘100 consecutive strikes by a thick and large spear! It’ll different

than last time!’ The moment I stabbed its body with my enlarged spear, the Mana Eater’s body puffed up crazily and tried to swallow me. However, a wall of ice immediately rose up around me, freezing parts of the Mana Eater’s body and shattering it. Ice created from Ruyue and Sharana’s joint power truly had incredible destructive power and defensive power.

“Huaaaaaaaaaap!”

[Kugyaaaaaaaa!]

Gigant Time’s effect was truly amazing. Even though I was small, I was still able to wield the giant spear freely! In the 3 seconds that felt like 30 seconds, I consecutively struck my spear into its body. I wanted to blow up its entire body!

[Deathblood activates, taking 10% of the enemy’s mana.]

[Deathblood activates, taking 10% of the enemy’s mana.]

Then, Deathblood activated twice and overflowed my body with mana!

Just 10% of its mana was enough to replenish my mana to full. With twice the amount, an overwhelming pressure weighed down on me. When I circulated Peruta Circuit, I felt like my body would

explode. However, I had taken this into consideration! Without hesitation, I poured out mana, flaring up a white aura above the chaos flames enveloping the giant spear.

“Heroic Strike!”

If there was a fire wielded by the Devil of Hell, Balrog, would it be this? A terrifying flame shot up to the sky as I pierced the Mana Eater’s body with my flaming spear.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kiaaaaaa!]

The chaos flames surrounding the spear dealt great damage to the Mana Eater, but it was the white aura that was more effective against the Mana Eater. Though it was only a theory, I suspected that Heroic Aura couldn’t be absorbed as a pure mana. Although I couldn’t be sure, I had more than enough mana to test the theory!

I followed up with a second, then third Heroic Strike. The mana overflowing inside me drained out, and in return, consecutive critical hits rang out. My theory seemed to be true!

“Peika!”

[Got it!]

Peika quickly flew toward me, infusing herself into my spear. Instead of the chaos flames, Heroic Aura and white lightning enveloped my spear. Its body was already covered with chaos flames. As such, it was more effective to borrow Peika's power than to attack with more chaos flames.

[Y-You, a mere human!]

With mana taken by me again, the Mana Eater had become visibly weaker. Furthermore, Daisy's undead army was cutting apart its tentacles everywhere and preventing it from recovering mana. With chaos flames and blood contamination constantly draining its mana, it would surely die if this continued.

However, I couldn't be certain that Daisy and my elementals could last until then. More importantly, I wanted to finish the job with my own strength. Now was the time, when Gigant Time was still active.

As such, I held my spear transformed into a giant white lightning and struck the Mana Eater again.

“Heroic Strike!”

[I'll kill you and regain my mana!]

[I won't let that happen!]

“Tentacles, cut them all off!”

Amidst shouts from all sides, our bodies and powerful mana clashed. Then, no sound entered my ears. The tentacles wanting to penetrate my armor, the earth tremoring with the Mana Eater’s struggling, Ruyue’s ice scattering into all directions, and the Chaotic Spear infused with Peika, crackling with a blinding lightning.

[Deathblood activates, taking 10% of the enemy’s mana.]

The moment I heard that message, I detonated the mana gathered in my spear and dealt a final blow to the Mana Eater.

“Die, my armor’s archenemy!”

Don’t think I forgot about you breaking my Epic-grade armor!

[Kak! M-My m-mana...!]

Its dying words was quite memorable. In an instant, its body shrunk down. The once boundless mana contained in the earth had all drained out, and was gathering in a single point.

Wait, was this...?

“Danger, Kang Shin!”

It was the third shout from Daisy I heard. However, I wasn’t the only one in danger. This mana explosion couldn’t be targeting be alone. I gritted my teeth and threw my body toward that single point.

“Dragon Skin!”

‘Don’t let me down, Dragon Skin! Don’t let me down, Golden Scarab Tattoo!’

I covered the Mana Eater’s compressed body with my own. Immediately afterwards, a huge explosion followed.

[Event Raid success! Four participants successfully completed an Event Raid! This great achievement increases the rewards greatly! As your average rank is lower than the raid boss, the reward increases again!]

[For completing an Event Raid, you obtained 5 stat points and 2 skill points. Current skill points: 6]

[Rewards will be distributed in order of contribution.]

[Kang Shin-nim’s contribution is the highest. Choose your

reward.]

- [1. Mana Absorption Magic Book
2. Million Tentacle (Epic)
3. Elixir x3
4. Mana Eater's Hood (Epic)]

I felt like I had been hit with a blunt weapon and felt dizzy. Having almost died twice in a single day, I didn't feel like I was alive.

But still, I didn't die. Of course, if I wasn't confident to a certain degree, I wouldn't have thrown my body as such.

“Kang Shin, Kang Shin! Tell me if you're dead!”

“How would I answer if I'm dead!?”

Feeling Daisy's presence nearing me, I shot up and shouted. After seeing me get up, Daisy's stiffened expression loosened. She seemed relieved. It was rare for her to shout, but I had heard her shout more than once today. SSS rank raid, how amazing!

While I was in a daze thinking, another shout rang out from above.

“Crown Prince! I'm coming down!”

“Uaaaaaaaak! Help, I can’t hold out any longer!”

Ah... Right, that was there. Seeing Daisy tilt her head and look up into the sky, I shrugged and spoke.

“Let’s go take care of those.”

From then, it only us two hours to clean the aerial army and descend from the mountain.

Author’s note:

Panan continent part is close to being done. Now, what reward will Shin choose and how will Ren and Lebuik interact with Daisy!? Will Daisy and Shin be able to safely see them off to the coast? Will they be able to defeat the El Patiz? Look forward to it!

Chapter 193. Absolute Soul (5)

When we defeated the aerial army and entered another forest to escape the reinforcements pursuit, Daisy let out a sigh.

She was riding on Iana, the Iron Boar. She had somehow modified it to have a steel body, and it even crackled with lightning as he bulldozed through everything. Rather than an undead, it was a futuristic cyborg.

She looked incredibly relaxed for someone riding on a vigorously moving boar, as she asked me a question.

“Annoying. The whole world, those bugs?”

“Yes. Almost all monsters in this world became like that tens of years ago.... Crown Prince, who is this dazzling beauty!?”

Mesmerized by Daisy’s figure, Ren answered instead, then whispered in my ear with a flushed face. If you want to say something secretly, just message me! Are you doing this on purpose to get Daisy to notice you!?

“Why is Crown Prince so popular with beautiful women!?”

It seemed that was what he really wanted to ask. But wasn’t there a beautiful woman who loved you too!? She’s right next to you! Think about where Tytyl and Mytyl found their bluebird!

Ah, now that I think about it, that means that my bluebird is in my house too. I couldn't help but be shocked at the fact that even the world-famous fairy tale was pointing to Yua being my bluebird of happiness. But that was beside the point. There was something I had to tell Ren.

“Ren, Daisy is my guild member. We aren't in a man-woman relationship. We're just friends.”

“Don't say that, Crown Prince. What kind of idiot would come to a ruined world because she was worried about a friend!? Don't make excuses!”

“Are you calling me an idiot? Didn't I come to help you? Do you want to die?”

“Ah, y-you're right. I'm not calling Crown Prince an idiot. I'm not doubting our friendship either...”

When I formed my aura around my gauntlet and glared at Ren, he waved his hands in denial as he sweated. He was brave when he fought, but I didn't know why he became so pathetic whenever we talked about something like this.

“Crown Prince and I are both men, but a pure friendship between a man and a woman is harder to find.”

“You're too old-fashioned...”

However, as I had once thought the relationship I had with Hwaya and Ye-Eun were of pure friendship, I couldn't deny him directly. Though I believed that pure friendship between members of the opposite sex existed, I couldn't be bothered to argue with Ren at the moment. As such, I simply smiled bitterly.

At that moment, Daisy's boar slowed down and Daisy spoke nonchalantly.

"Kang Shin promised me. To save my world."

"Yeah, I did."

"Meeting Kang Shin, I felt... strength and hope. I resolved... to rise, once again. Can't let him die here. So I came to save him."

She was talking about why she came to help! It was more or less what I was expecting. More importantly, look! What a pure and wholesome reason! It felt more genuine than saying we had some deep friendship, as we had not known each other for long. In a way, it made me happy. I stuck my tongue out at Ren, then answered Daisy.

"Thanks, Daisy. You saved us."

"Beyond's 13th floor cleared, then came. That's why I was late."

"You weren't that late. It was the perfect timing."

“Un... I also obtained a good weapon.”

Daisy held up a silver chain whip, which didn't look that different from what she had before, with a satisfied expression. If I remembered correctly, she said it was a unique enchanting method from her continent or perhaps from her race. No matter what weapons she had, she could fuse their functions into a single weapon. It was slightly different than how the Chaotic Spear worked, but it was still an infinitely growing weapon.

Of course, the weapon she enchanted to her chain whip was the Million Tentacle. I didn't really want to see what Million Tentacle looked like, and it seemed Daisy had thought the same way, as she immediately used the weapon as material to strengthen the chain whip.

“What was the reward Crown Prince got? I got the Epic-grade hood.”

“I won't tell you.”

As I had the highest contribution, the others couldn't tell what item I chose. However, as there were two Epic-grade items left after I made my choice, Ren seemed to be extremely curious about the reward I got. On the other hand, Lebuik, who got the Elixirs, didn't look all that curious.

“Could it be a Legend-grade item? Is it truly the Legend-grade I only heard about it stories?”

“Legend-grade can’t be that easy.”

“Of course not. I’ve never seen one before.”

“Legend... Very few owners. I only have one.”

She was probably born with her Evil Eyes, so she was probably talking about something else. I couldn’t help but be curious about her Legend-grade item, but I kept my silence. Then, I told the two of them.

“It wasn’t Legend-grade. Maybe you guys will find out later.”

Of course, the reward I got was the Mana Absorption Magic Book. The skill was registered the moment I obtained it. With this skill, my plan became flawless. I even thought that meeting the Mana Eater was a blessing. Now, if I just had time to use Skill Synthesis, everything would be perfect.

“How long do we have left, Ren?”

“We’ll reach the plains in just 70 kilometers... If possible, I’d like to rest once before.”

“That’s a good idea. The children must be tired too.”

The children riding on Ruyue, regardless of whether they were

beastman or human, were all dozing off. Beastmen only differed from humans in that they had animal ears and tails. Now that they were sleeping, they were folded down and made them look even cuter. If it wasn't for Ruyue's carefulness, they would have fallen off of her a long time ago.

Daisy looked at the children and spoke apathetically.

“Cooperation is good. Acknowledging other race, also good.”

“Daisy...?”

“... Let's hurry. I want to go back quickly.”

Daisy turned away. Iana kicked the ground and began to march forward quickly. I looked at her back blankly and forgot to run for a moment.

“She's powerful and truly beautiful... Crown Prince, I might have fallen in love with her. Miss Silver Wolf is also beautiful, but she lacks the elegance that lady has.”

“Don't, Ren. Take my advice, if you don't people around you will only end up hurt.”

Namely, you and Lebuik. Just look for your bluebird already!

As Ren suggested, we stopped to take a rest before we reached the

plain. Perhaps knowing that they'll reach the plain soon, the children seemed to be feeling anxious. It was understandable, as it wouldn't end with us just running across the plain to the coast. I had already consulted the others about this matter.

“Guys, make sure you get some sleep for tomorrow.”

“Oppa... I'm scared.”

“Me too.”

“Many people died.”

“Will we die too? What happens when you die?”

“I don't like bugs...”

Elfa and the other kids barraged me with questions. I wryly smiled and consoled them until they fell asleep. Ren and Lebuik helped me as well.

After the children all fell asleep, I put down Elfa, who was leaning against me, and put a blanket over her. Then, I stood up.

“Ren, I'll be off for a bit.”

“Got it. Um... Thank Miss Ectradion for today.”

“Sure.”

As undead monsters never fell asleep, never felt tired, and carried out their master's commands faithfully, they were practically born for night watch. Daisy's undead minions were guarding the area around the tent. This didn't mean that Daisy had to be awake. However, she seemed to have found it cumbersome to stay in the tent with others, as she said she'd stay outside.

Seeing me leave the tent, Lotte, who was only in a light sleep, woke up and rose.

“Hero, I'll go too.”

“No, Lotte. I'll be back in a bit, so sleep. You did well today.”

“Mm... If that's what Hero says...”

I then met eyes with Daisy, who was resting on Iana's hard back.

“Where are you going?”

“To do some business.”

“Un.”

“Ren says thank you.”

“Lion beastman?”

“Yeah.”

“I don’t like men. The feelings they have for me, even more uncomfortable. If they put them into action... Disgusting.”

She thoroughly stomped on the seed that barely sprouted. I smiled bitterly as I spoke.

“It’s out of respect for your overwhelming power. In his mind, he might be a bit forward, so forgive him.”

“You respect me, too?”

“Not really? I do think you’re a reliable ally that I can trust to protect my back.”

“I see.”

Even though she was the one who asked, she nodded her head somewhat apathetically. Then, she looked at me and asked.

“Is it really okay, like this?”

“Yeah, it’s fine.”

“... Okay. About battles, you’re genius. I trust you.”

“Tomorrow, protect the children.”

“Existences with potential, I like.”

“Just call them children, really.”

Daisy shook her head resolutely and added.

“Children aren’t, only ones with potential. Others have potential too, like you.”

“Thanks for the compliment. For the record, you have it too. Potential.”

“Yes, I know. Now, I like me too.”

“Y-Yeah, that’s good.”

The corner of Daisy’s lips curled up in a smile. Caught off guard by her mesmerizing smile, I fell in a daze for a brief moment. I then let out a dry cough and walked off after saying goodbye. Daisy sent me off by weakly waving her hand.

Monsters were active even deep into the night. In this short period of time, I felt like I crushed at least 30 of them.

“I’m finally alone... Skill Synthesis.”

‘I’ve been using it quite a lot in this world.’ I thought as a circular stone slab was summoned in front of me. I then opened my skill window and took out the skills I needed. In the supplement skill slots, I placed Heavy Armor Mastery, Death Counter, then Mana Absorption.

In the base skill slot, I placed Soul Guard.

“Huu... That’s it, right? Good. Skill Synthesis!”

The materials were there, and the circular stone slab began to spin as it shone with a golden radiance. I looked at the slab in a daze, forgetting to even breathe. It didn’t take long. A transparent, dazzling symbol appeared, then jumped into my face as if it couldn’t wait any longer.

[You obtained the unique skill, ‘Absolute Soul’!]

When I read the skill description, my eyes widened. It was even more perfect than what I had imagined! Not only would it affect my future dungeon progress and monster subjugation, but it would also deliver me a sure victory in tomorrow’s battle.

I smiled. My final night in the Panan continent was passing by quickly.

Author's note:

Eh? You thought I'd tell you!? It's a secret until the crucial moment! (Bang!)

Chapter 194. Absolute Soul (6)

Though I was somewhat expecting it, the moment we left the forest, I became stifled for breath. The number of monsters present made me wonder if all the monsters in the world were gathered here. It wasn't that I thought our presence was unnoticed, but this was too much. It was almost as if... all the El Patiz in the world were deployed to hunt us.

I had already seen a sky full of monsters, but the number of monsters filling up the plain was as if all the floors in the dungeon broke down and had their monsters released. Even Daisy, who commanded an army of undead, seemed to flinch.

If we tried to charge through them like we did previously, we would undoubtedly be swallowed up before we could advance even a 100 meters.

“Ren... What are we going to do?”

“Crown Prince should already know. We can only break through.”

Right, I wasn't a devil who would abandon the children after coming this far. Plus, even if we retreated to the forest, it wasn't a place the children could survive in without Ren. The ocean, the place the El Patiz couldn't go. We had to reach that place.

“Alright, then let's fly.”

There was no need to mind the monsters on the ground!

I breathed in and jumped on Lotte's back with Ren, two beastmen children, and one human girl. The others were riding Daisy's Flame Drake, Pookie. The monsters on the ground charged at us like an army of ants and roared, but that was none of our business.

“We're going straight to the ocean!”

“Got it.”

Lotte flapped her wings and shot up. Instead of the monsters on the ground, which became like dogs chasing after chickens, the flying monsters roared and flew toward us. A majority of them instantly turned into stone and fell. The monsters on the ground hit by the rocks screamed. This was truly killing two birds with one stone!

“Shin oppa is cool!”

“Thanks, Elfa.”

No matter how much they used each other as shields or came from different angles to avoid my sight, unless their resistance was above SS+ rank, they had no choice but to turn into stone the moment they neared me. To me, numbers didn't mean a thing anymore.

“Lotte, full speed ahead!”

[I know, Hero!]

Lotte accelerated, and Pookie chased after us. Enemies in front of us all turned into stone, and enemies behind and to our sides were first pushed back with Mad Typhoon, then turned into stone. There was 50 km from the start of the plain to the coast, and we had already passed about 10 km.

[Hero, there are attacks coming from below.]

“Raise the altitude a bit more! Guys, remember, if you’re feeling tired, use the mana breathing method!”

“Okay!”

“Un!”

After a while, the number of monsters that couldn’t be petrified increased. I held onto a Mana Potion with my mouth and swung my spear at the giant flying monsters attacking us fiercely.

“Ren! Protect the children!”

[I can handle that much!]

“Pookie, breath!”

[Guaaaaang!]

Daisy, who was following from behind, seemed to have been attacked by the monsters as well. As I attacked with my spear, I once again used the power of my Evil Eyes against the army of monsters.

“Let’s see if you can be so energetic when we get to the ocean!”

[Kiaaaaaaak!]

[Kyaaaaa! Eat this!]

Lotte flapped her wings fiercely and breathed out black flames, burning the enemies in front of us to ashes. If a path was open for even a moment, I would go through it! With the Riding skill, Lotte and I were like a single entity as we displayed flawless coordination, becoming a single acute bullet that shot through the air. Because of our incredible speed, Ren, Sharana, and Ruyue all had to help prevent the children from falling.

“Oppa, look!”

Then, Elfa screamed. I looked at the direction Elfa was pointing to, as I stabbed my spear through the neck of a wyvern. In the air

was a giant tuna. Though we were far away, its fat body and tuna face was too clear. I doubted my eyes. It was just too big!

“What the hell is that tuna? Why is a tuna flying?”

“Dear god, it’s the Guardian Aikan... The divine beast protector of the ocean kingdom Zenyt!”

“A tuna is...?”

“I thought they would be safe from the El Patiz, but to think even Aikan had been taken over...! Ku, did they aim for when it came out to protect the kingdom!?”

“It’s a tuna! You know, the fish!?”

Ren spoke with grief without paying attention to my questions. Regardless of whether it was a tuna or a salmon, it was giving off a terrifying mana. We were over 1 km away, but the mana it was emitting made my body tremble slightly.

[Guaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!]

The giant tuna cried in the air and charged toward us like the devil. It was incomparably bigger than the Power Basilisk, which gave me the Evil Eyes! It went without saying that the mana it possessed in its body was something I could not hope to affect with my Evil Eyes. If it simply crashed into us, we would undoubtedly be crushed to death! The other flying monsters seemed to be

terrified by the tuna too, as they all scattered away.

At that moment, Pookie stepped in front of Lotte. Daisy took out a chain whip with a flushed face.

“That figure, I like it.”

“But it’s a tuna.”

“Extremely powerful. Smooth body. I want it.”

“But it’s... a tuna!”

What’s wrong with these people!? Something was wrong! Daisy pulled on her whip, as if she was burning with passion, then swung her whip when the tuna neared us.

“Spines! Bloom!”

In an instant, the end of the whip split, forming thousands of gross tentacles, which swept over the tuna. From the distance, it looked like a jellyfish sticking onto its prey. In any case, its repulsive appearance made me want to turn away.

“It looks like you tried to make it sound cool, but words can’t change tentacles into spines!”

“Kuk, the skill... couldn’t be changed...”

Daisy’s voice was full of grief, even making me feel sympathy for her. Of course, looks had little to do with strength. Each spine, possessing terrifying levels of mana, reached the tuna, crawling straight to its brain. Ren spoke as he shuddered.

“It feels like I’m watching an El Patiz mutant...”

“Well, I’m sure they’re only trying to destroy the brain. I won’t argue that it’s disgusting though.”

Why did this continent have to filled with things like bugs and tentacles? Thankfully, I was the only one seeing such cruel sights. Even while I thought rather stupid things, the tuna didn’t stop charging toward us. It shone with a brilliant light and burned away the tentacles sticking to its body. Although its overwhelming power was worthy of its name as a guardian, there were more tentacles being created then being burned. How amazing!

“Brain, open it. Let’s be friends.”

[Guaaaaaaaang!]

Daisy made the worst kind of proposal one could get as she added in another skill. Her ears seemed to perk up slightly, after which a black mist spread out from the hand unoccupied by the whip. When the tuna touched the mist, the tuna’s resistance began to dwindle slowly. I suspected that it was a skill necessary to create an

undead.

[Guaaaaaaaaaaa!]

“Uut, resisting. Kang Shin, help.”

The tuna’s roar rang out sonorously in all directions. Then, countless number of flying monsters once again began to attack, like soldiers following the command of a general. However, they weren’t attacking us, but rather the tentacles connecting Daisy and the tuna. ‘Were you guys okay with being ordered around by a tuna!?’ I lamented. Regardless, if we could make the tuna become part of our strengths, it couldn’t be better. I materialized Peika.

“Peika, go wild! Burn up everything!”

[That’s exactly what I like to hear!]

Daisy shot out countless number of tentacles; the tuna roared, bounded by the tentacles; and many monsters swooped in to free the tuna. Peika jumped into the fray daringly and shot out vast amount of lightning. The sky was almost being dyed gold.

[Come! I’ll fry all of you to crisp!]

As powerful as Peika was, she expended a vast amount of mana. Although the fight between the tuna and Daisy was leaning towards Daisy’s victory with Peika joining, I was paying for it with my mana. I impatiently waited for the Mana Potion’s cooldown

time to end. Meanwhile, I put a highest-grade Mana Potion in my mouth and circulated Peruta Circuit even more strongly to collect mana from the surroundings.

Perhaps because I was focused on Peruta Circuit, I was the first to notice.

“The tuna is doing something!”

“It opened mouth. Before it does something, destroy bugs.”

Daisy calmly spoke and poured out flying undead monsters from her inventory with a wave of her hand. The undead monsters flew in a straight line and attacked the giant tuna’s head. Although many tentacles were going inside the giant tuna’s body from its mouth, the tuna paid them no mind as it opened its mouth wider. Daisy’s expression turned slightly perplexed.

“That, must dodge. Similar power to, mana wave. Tentacles... Spines are, being destroyed.”

“No, it’ll be hard to escape from its range, so let’s destroy its brain before then!”

“Guild master’s spirit, cool.”

I grinned at Daisy’s comment, then charged towards the tuna on Lotte. The children screamed, but I couldn’t hold onto them right now.

“Hold on, guys!”

“U-Un, oppa!”

“Un!”

I raised my spear high, and called Peika and Sharana. I infused Sharana in my body and Peika in the Chaotic Spear! Then, Lotte and I shot towards the monsters blocking our path with the force to destroy a world.

“Wind King’s Rage!”

The power of lightning and wind that had begun to gather in my body drove me forward. Lotte adapted to the flow surprisingly naturally, flying faster than lightning and freer than wind. Every time a monster in front of us was sent flying, the hard-to-contain power intensified. Though only a little, mana was also filling up inside me!

Using Mad Typhoon, I contained the wild and turbulent lightning and wind in the form of a whirlpool. I then changed directions and dug into another group of monsters. There was no need to dodge anything. No monsters existed that could be my spear’s opponent!

“Huaaaaaaaaaap! Now it’s your turn!”

The attack had long since charged up to 150%. I held up the spear buried in a giant whirlpool and pointed it at the tuna's head. By now, visible particles of mana had gathered at its mouth. If possible, I had to neutralize it now!

“Croooooooooown Princeeeeeee! The children will diiiiiiie!”

“Hold on tight!”

Even I couldn't control Lotte's speed! I focused solely on piercing the tuna with this whirlpool of lightning and wind in my hand. Now!

[Kuaaaaaaang!!]

I didn't have a chance to clash with whatever it was trying to do, as the spear bore through its head and caused a giant explosion.

[Critical Hit!]

I pulled out the spear from its head, which was dug in like a crater. I could feel it slowly closing its mouth. Of course. How could it shoot out a mana wave when its head exploded?

Ah. I really poured out all the strength in my body. The skill description said I wouldn't be able to use the skill for 3 hours, but that wasn't it. I didn't know if I had the strength to use other skills. I was completely exhausted.

At that moment, hundreds of tentacles approached me and dug into the place my spear had pierced through. They were truly disgusting.

[Good, reached the brain.]

“Uek, disgusting.”

Daisy seemed to be extremely elated as she even messaged me to report on her success. Meanwhile, I could feel something inside its brain puffing up unnaturally. Soon, a giant bug popped out. There were strange bumps on its body, and its mouth looked like a drill. So this was an El Patiz. It wasn't even dead.

“I need to kill it.”

“Crown Prince, you look tired.”

“This is not—”

“Crown Prince!”

Before I could finish my sentence, I became startled by Ren's shout and turned around. However, I couldn't turn my body. It seemed like my body was fixed in place.

“This is something special prepared just for you.”

An unpleasant voice of a man rang out. It came from one of the children on Lotte's back, Uruto.

"I didn't think I'd be able to capture another Hero. You see, we only have two of our kind that can contain a Hero... Losing Aikan is a bit regretful, but if we can obtain a Hero in exchange, it is more than worth it. Ah, don't think about using your elementals. As long as I'm touching you, I can damage you as much as I want."

"U-Uruto!?"

"Don't come close, Elfa! He isn't Uruto!"

"Kuk, Crown Prince, I can't get him off! I-If I use an attack skill, you'll...!"

"Ren, I'm fine, so take the others and go to Daisy! I'll deal with this on my own!"

"Kuk... Understood!"

"Oppa, Shin op—!"

Elfa closed her mouth mid-shout. More exactly, Ren had grabbed her and the other human girl. Lotte seemed to have noticed what was happening on her back as she thrashed about wildly.

[A mere human brat dares to attack the Hero!]

However, Uruto was no longer in a human form. I didn't know how he was binding me, but there were something adhesive stuck to my chest and limbs.

“You can't escape. Your mana should be frozen as well as your body. You won't be able to open your inventory much less open the door to the dungeon. I was created for this purpose. Unless you're something like a Mana Eater, you won't be able to escape. Now, open your mouth. Become our ally.”

It was a powerful binding just like the Demon Lord's curse cast on me by Shina in the Luka continent. Although I should be able to use skills, it was difficult to do so without being able to move my body.

Plus, the El Patiz binding me was perfectly guarded against the one person who might be able to free me, Daisy. Knowing that she was a necromancer, it had provided a prey in the form of Aikan. It knew that Daisy would try to use necromancy on Aikan the moment it was defeated. Currently, Daisy was completely focused on making Aikan into her own, so much so that she didn't even realize the danger I was in.

“But I didn't detect any mana from your brain...!”

“I told you, I was created for this purpose. I hid myself to hunt the last explorer when I had the chance.”

The voice no longer belonged to that of a human. The bug that had jumped out of Aikan's brain was approaching me slowly.

“Then you won't be discovered by anyone!?”

“Huhuhu, I can imitate anyone with my mana. Unless you can read my thoughts or read my soul, you won't be able to see through me.”

“... Right, it was indeed difficult to read your at first.”

Of course, that wasn't the case now. Although it was a bit embarrassing to say, I had the Absolute Soul skill. I could be called an expert when it came to souls.

“...?”

“Sky God's Play.”

The next moment, I was floating in the air leisurely... as what people from Earth would call, a fly.

“What...!?”

[Guaaaaaaaaa!]

Uruto, who had turned into a slime-like creature, and the

unpleasant-looking bug that looked like a floating vein both made disconcerted shouts. I yelled as a fly.

“Peika, scorch them!”

[Got it!]

“Kuk, in that case, we’ll take the other one...!”

[Unless you’re faster than lightning, it’s over!]

The moment the slime tried to stick onto Lotte’s body, Peika’s lightning shot down. The slime that had imitated Uruto then vaporized in mid-air. While the other bug didn’t know what to do, I returned to my original form and grinned.

“Villains can’t die without giving out all the information, can they? You said there’s one more of you?”

[Guaaaaaang!]

10 minutes after that, we set off toward the coast once again. This time, with a new friend, Aikan, and at full speed.

Author’s note:

Shin could have destroyed the slime El Patiz with his elementals’

power or at least, he could've dodged it easily. He purposely acted as if he was completely exhausted after using Wind King's Rage to draw out the enemy.

Chapter 195. Absolute Soul (7)

“Strange...”

The number of monsters in the air was increasing. They were desperately trying to stop us. Even though the giant tuna Aikan had become an undead monster with its power as a guardian intact, it could not continue to march forward freely with so many monsters blocking the way.

“Oppa, is Uruto gone?”

“Uruto is dead.”

“Uruto...”

Plus, after finding out that a friend had died, the children’s mood and morale had turned for the worst. They cried in Ren’s, Lebuik’s, and my embrace. Though they lasted this far in such a hopeless situation, after finding out that a friend they had talked and laughed with had been a bug the entire time, the shock caused them to lose all of their energy.

As I had told Ren and Lebuik about the truth before, they weren’t in shock, but they seemed worried about the enervated children.

‘Should I have done it differently?’

I could have easily killed the fake Uruto when the children weren't looking. However, I didn't do so, because there was valuable information to obtain, like how they operated.

"It's more shocking when someone disappears suddenly. That was Book Walker's method. Once we woke up from sleep, our friends would be gone. One by one, it was terrifying."

"Mm... It's a bit different in our case though."

Daisy discovered what I was thinking instantly and consoled me. Perhaps, my thoughts flowed into her while I wasn't paying attention. With a wry smile, I held up my spear and swept away dozens of monsters with a swing.

"We've come far. We should be able to bring the children to safety soon."

"About that, there's something..."

Daisy brought herself next to me and whispered something in my ear. It was rather simple.

"The skill point I have left, if I use them, I can bring two people. To Earth, total six people."

I shook my head.

“No, it’s not enough.”

“Just one, we have to give up.”

“I’ll get mad, you know?”

“That might be, less sacrifice. We don’t know, what will come... Kang Shin might live, but the children, all might die.”

Seeing Daisy’s serious expression, I flicked her forehead. She took a few steps back with a surprised face. With how big Aikan was, just taking a few steps back still put us on the same level.

“Don’t worry, I won’t let any of them die.”

“But you only have talent, for fighting.”

“I have elementals! Ren and Lebuik are trying hard too. So Daisy, please.”

“Then, fine. You’re the guild master, I’ll respect your wishes.”

“I know you came to help me. Thanks.”

“To save our worlds. We are in a contract.”

“Right, contract.”

I grinned at her words. Perhaps because I refused her offer, her cheeks were puffed up. She looked incredibly cute.

Of course, with the situation being what it is, I couldn't leisurely stare at Daisy. The sky was practically made of monsters that were attacking us from all directions.

“Aikan's secret skill, Beam!”

“Is that what it was trying to use before!?”

While I asked in shock, Aikan opened its mouth and gathered mana. At its immense suction power, the monsters that were pulled inside all disintegrated from the high density of mana.

[Guaaaaaaaaa!]

Soon, a mana wave thick enough to envelop a whole building shot out from its mouth. The path taken by the mana wave shone like a white slate.

To our dismay, however, the area swept by the mana wave were filled up with monsters again in just 20 seconds. They kept coming and coming like homework. Daisy seemed to be thinking the same thing.

“... More coming, I'm tired.”

“Can’t you use those tentacles?”

“Spines. Once per day.”

She was still insisting on it being spines. While Daisy sulked that nothing changed even with Aikan’s mana wave, I thought about what I could do. I looked back at Ren and Lebuik. Ren was focused on taking care of the children, while Lebuik was focused on shooting down monsters with her crossbow. With that, a thought suddenly flashed across my mind.

“Haa, I really didn’t want to do this, but it looks like I have no choice...”

“What?”

“It’s a bit disgusting, so close your eyes. Gigant Time!”

Thankfully, Sky God’s Play was still in effect for about 10 minutes. Before that, however, I used Gigant Time. Without this skill, what I was about to do would have no meaning.

After I used Gigant Time, I closed my eyes and imagined the form I would take. As I had practiced many times before, I could soon feel that I transformed.

“Kyaaaaa.”

Daisy must have been extremely surprised, as she screamed without an exclamation mark. But since she screamed, it meant that the transformation was a success. I opened my eyes.

Then, feeling dizzy from the 360 degrees vision, I almost vomited.

“What did you do!?”

Lebuik, who turned around to see me after Daisy’s scream, also asked in surprise. I replied bluntly.

“Can’t you see?”

“I can’t! That’s why I’m asking! W-What is that disgusting...”

My original eyes were located further up than normal. With Sky God’s Play, I transformed my body into a 10-meter tall giant. Even Aikan probably found it hard to carry me. With this size, however, even though I would be able to move freely with my high stats, fighting would be more cumbersome than usual. Of course, I didn’t become a giant just to fight the monsters like this.

After all, what I gigantified with Gigant Time wasn’t my weapon, arms, or legs, but my eyes. I was thankful that everything went as I imagined.

“Everyone look here! If I’m what you want, come!”

[You used high-rank Provoke! All enemies burn fiercely with hatred and hostility towards you!]

It was worth holding in the dizziness and shouting. Though the El Patiz were controlling their bodies, in the end, they were still monsters, which were weak to provocation. They didn’t hide behind bigger monsters to hide from my Evil Eyes. They simply charged toward me with piercing killing intent. Of course, with so many of them, I couldn’t help but sweat at the sight of them.

Just one second afterward, a countless number of rocks fell to the ground.

“Come! Come!”

[You used high-rank Provoke! All enemies burn fiercely with hatred and hostility towards you!]

Rocks rained down. There were even monsters that lost their lives after being hit by them.

“Come!”

“So that disgusting look was on purpose...!”

I pretended not to hear Lebuik. Hundreds of eyes covering my body blinked repeatedly as they aimed at more targets.

“This is the combined power of the mythical Argos and Medusa!”

Argos, the thousand-eyed giant ordered by Hera to watch over Io and slain by Hermes. With eyes covering its body, it had no blind spots. It was the perfect appearance for my Evil Eyes!

“Come! Come attack me!”

I shouted triumphantly and blinked once again. Monsters closing in on us all turned to stone, and only the monsters with an abnormally high resistance survived. Lebuik then commented on my appearance.

“Eyes all over the body... gross.”

“I can’t maintain it for very long anyway.”

It was Zeus who ordered Hermes to slay Argos. As the holder of Zeus’ true name, it was a bit ironic that I took Argos’ form.

The monsters filling up the sky visibly decreased. By the time Gigant Time ended and it became hard for all of the eyes to have an equal effect, only a few powerful monsters were left.

[Gaoooooooo!]

[Kuaaaaaaaaaa!]

Feeling satisfied by the monsters roaring after losing their friends and subordinates, I returned to my original appearance. Although Sky God's Play should have lasted a couple more minutes, it had ended prematurely. It was perhaps because taking Argos' form used more energy, or because I strengthened the power of my Evil Eyes with it.

Regardless, as I had obtained the result I wanted, I was satisfied. There seemed to be some hope now. With a sigh of relief, I took out a Mana Potion from my inventory.

“Aikan, forward. Crush everything.”

[Uooooooooong!]

There really were only a few left. Realizing this, Daisy ordered Aikan in a cool pose. Although it was undead, Aikan intelligently responded with a roar and charged forward. The few monsters that were left had no chance against Aikan.

“Just 5 km more, Crown Prince!”

“Ren-nim, calm down! Look forward!”

“Kuk, how can I calm down, Lebu...ik?”

Aaah, though it was a difficult journey, once we arrived at the coast, everything would be over.... Eh?

“As expected... there’s an army.”

Of course, I’d somewhat expected it as well. I didn’t think they’d try to stop us with just monsters. However, the army standing by the coast like beach lifeguards seemed to surprise Ren and Lebuik more than me or Daisy.

“How dare they...!?”

“Dear God...”

Ren and Lebuik’s exclaimed. Did they know someone? I surveyed the ground. Though there weren’t as many as the monsters we faced in the sky, the refined spirit and keen killing intent of the soldiers radiated out. Of course, with most of them being men, there really wasn’t a reason to keep staring at them. After all, I couldn’t be certain how strong they were before I fought them.

Other than the army, I focused my attention on... the commander. Right, the strength of an army really was in the hands of its commander. I looked at the man standing in the front. Golden hair like a lion’s mane, deep wrinkles across the forehead, and brilliant golden pupils. The firm, strong muscular body, and a set of jet-black armor. Finally, in his hands, a large claymore.

He was too similar to someone I knew. In fact, they almost had the same face. No matter how dense I was, it wasn't hard to figure out who he was.

“Your... Highness...!”

“Kuuk, Father...!”

“...”

The last trial awaiting us at the coast. It was none other than the Panan continent's Hero, and the world's enemy.

Chapter 196. Absolute Soul (8)

“This is the worst situation I could have imagined.”

“Even I can’t win against that. Before we can’t, go back to the dungeon forever... decide.”

Aikan stopped in the air hurriedly. Daisy stared at me fixedly and pressed me for a decision. What she wanted was undoubtedly to abandon one child so that the rest can escape.

However, I didn’t want that. The value of a life wasn’t something I could calculate. Furthermore...

I took my eyes off of Daisy and looked at Ren. His gaze were fixed on Panan continent’s Hero. His hands were clenching his sword and shaking. As for Lebuik, she initially had a conflicted expression, but after seeing Ren, she took a battle stance with a resolute expression. She spoke with a stiff voice.

“Before my head rolls... Ren-nim must not die.”

“Don’t speak nonsense, Lebuik. Everyone must survive.”

“Coming.”

Daisy made a brief comment immediately following Ren’s heartfelt statement. Immediately afterwards, a light flashed on the

ground and a portion of Aikan's body disintegrated. It was an enormous amount of mana.

“Pure aura...!? What kind of brute strength is that!?”

“Kuk, Father's strength is beyond our imagination. Still, he fell to the scheme used against Crown Prince today. Damn...!”

“Daisy, Aikan is too big of a target! Move the children to Lotte's back!”

“That aura, fast! Living pet, more dangerous!”

[I am the queen of the wyverns, Dark Wing Lotte! Do not look down on me, Elf!]

Lotte quickly transformed into her wyvern form, grabbing children by her mouth and throwing them onto her back. I also helped move the children.

“Daisy, open the path with your undead. We need to go straight to the ocean! Ren, Lebuik, get on Lotte and protect the children!”

“What about Crown Prince!?”

I held up my Chaotic Spear. It was already surrounded by a whirlpool of chaos flames and Heroic Aura.

“I’ll stop the Hero.”

“With Deific Manifestation?”

Of course, I had not forgotten about Deific Manifestation. However, now wasn’t the time. Though the situation developed in one of the worst ways it could have, it wasn’t the end. Plus, the moment I manifested Peruta with Deific Manifestation, I...

I grinned.

“They’ll try to kill me too. It’s obvious if you think about why they brought out their head.”

“Crown Prince, are you saying you’ll use yourself as bait!?”

“Oh? You’ve gotten smarter, Ren.”

Right, they were aiming for me. Otherwise, they wouldn’t have sent out the ‘last remaining one.’ The power of the Hero could only be vested into a living creature. There had to be an El Patiz controlling the Hero inside his body.

“It’s too dangerous.”

“If you have a better way of keeping the children safe, tell me.”

Of course, there was no such way. I smiled wryly at Daisy, who was glaring at me.

“Don’t worry, I won’t die until I save your world.”

“An outstanding warrior must have, a cool mind, a burning heart. You’re too hot, for both. As a warrior, a second-rate.”

“I know my faults. Here, take this. It’s the Crystal Lair. With this, the children should be able to stay underwater safely.”

“I won’t accept.”

At that moment, a burst of light surged up from the ground once again. This time, Aikan generated a barrier of light at the area concentrated by the attack, but it seemed it wouldn’t be able to last long.

“Daisy, hurry!”

“.... Uuu, no matter win or lose, I’ll hit you.”

Unable to win against my stubbornness, Daisy complained and took the Crystal Lair, then summoned her undead army from her inventory.

“Open the path! Head straight to the ocean!”

[Kuaaaaaaaaaa!]

[Kuaaaaaaaaaa!]

At the same time, the warriors only the ground roared, marking the start of a war.

“Welcome the other world’s Hero!”

“Uwaaaaaaaaak!”

“Kuaaaaaaaaaa!”

I jumped off of Aikan’s back without hesitation. I immediately summoned Talaria and accelerated, as my spear continually grinded away monsters in its path. At the same time, I used another one of Hermes’ power, Caduceus!

[You summoned Caduceus. All physical abilities have been energized. The two snakes have opened their eyes. You can only use one of the snakes power.]

Last time, I used the destructive power of the black snake. However, this snake would bring about devastating results if used when my opponent was higher leveled than me. Even so,I still chose the black snake.

While the black snake slowly coiled around my arm, a voice rang out from behind.

“Uwuuuuuk!”

“Kuk, Ren-nim!”

I turned around and doubted my eyes. Ren was falling along with me. Of course, with the frowning Lebuik.

“What are you two doing!?”

“Miss Ectradion is more than enough to protect the children! Did Crown Prince think I wouldn’t notice Crown Prince trying to keep us out of harm’s way!? This is my world! If Crown Prince shoulders all the heavy burden and ends up dying, I won’t be able to live on as a warrior!”

“Ren-niiiiim!”

This... idiot! His absurd statement almost made me shout at him to stop acting like a kid. However, a golden aura flying toward me wiped the thought off my mind.

“Next time, it will be aimed at your friends.”

That bastard, he knew I was trying to act as the bait! I grit my

teeth and glared at the El Patiz comfortably waving his claymore. Not only did it kill the Hero and steal the Hero's power, it enjoyed itself using the Hero's power as if it was its own! The enemy in front of me wasn't a warrior. It was quite literally an insect! Unfortunately, it was an insect with great power!

“A mere bug dares to dishonor a once mighty warrior! Uoooooooooh!”

Before he fell onto the ground, Ren roared and stuck his claymore on the ground. The ground fissured and rocks shot up, shooting towards monsters around us. That was Outburst! Even though Ren was wearing Dullahan's armor, I had forgotten about it.

Then, Ren took off his armor and threw it away. Underneath was the Twin-headed Ogre Set! Right, no matter how many layers one put on, only one would be recognized as one's armor. As such, Ren put on the Twin-headed Ogre Set, which was made out of leather, and overlaid it with the metallic Dullahan Set. With that, Dullahan Set would be in effect, but when he took it off, the Twin-headed Ogre Set would take effect! How clever!

Having to take off one's armor was slightly annoying, but that was certainly the best thing an explorer without the Collector's Pocket Watch could do. However, that was no way enough to defeat the El Patiz. I also hurriedly descended. Lebuik followed suit.

“Don't block... me!”

In the air, Daisy's shout rang out. The undead monsters raised their voices and used their skills as they swept through the flying monsters. Though the El Patiz army on the ground looked uncomfortable, they were undoubtedly focused on us. Kuk, the damned golden aura was flying toward us again!

[You are injured by an aura of a powerful league. It is difficult to heal the injury from natural healing or ordinary potions.]

Although I dodged the attack, I was still damaged by it. I grit my teeth and circulated Peruta Circuit as I landed on the ground. The enemy was laughing, not far away from me.

“Deific Manifestation!”

“Why are you calling me by my name now, Ren...?”

As I was focused on the enemy completely, I didn't look at Ren who called me. However, he didn't respond. Then, the mana in the air began to burn. Wait, was this...!?

“Kuaaaaaang!”

Ren roared violently. The roar filled with mana even made my ears ring and caused the enemies to stagger. Using this opportunity, I glanced at the distance. The moment they met my

eyes, countless number of enemy soldiers turned to stone.

“Ha, quite a cowardly move for someone who calls himself a hero!”

“Cut the bullshit and attack!”

“Kuhaaaa!”

“Kuk, Ren-nim!”

Ren charged across the ground before me. A golden aura enveloped his body, as if a golden mane sprouted up. He had undoubtedly used Deific Manifestation. If he solo-cleared the 5th floor, he surely had that skill.

“Little kitten, I’ll take care of you today too! The Panan continent belongs to us, El Patiz!”

“Kuaaang!”

Ren seemed a bit strange. Though he was beastly, he never only roared. What did you summon, Ren!? Furthermore, the amount of aura in his claymore was powerful enough to contend with a Hero’s.

“Hmph, a mere beast!”

The claymore held up by the El Patiz clashed with Ren's own. It seemed to have been caught off guard by Ren's powerful strength as it fell back slightly. Meanwhile, I charged forward. Lebuik also charged on with a stern expression I had never seen before.

"I won't let Ren-nim die!"

"Huaaaaaap!"

[You used Frozen Roar! All enemies in the battlefield freezes in place. All allies temporarily become super-armored and has all abilities increased by 50%. Your chance of landing a critical hit doubles when fighting enemies affected by Frozen Roar.]

The moment I used Frozen Roar to help Ren's attack, all enemies in the battlefield froze. With their resistance lowered during freezing, many fell to my Evil Eyes' power and turned to stone. However, the El Patiz in the Hero's body, the world's enemy, wasn't affected. He easily bounced away Frozen Roar's effect. Then, Ren roared like a beast, as if he was stimulated by my roar.

"Kuaaaaang!"

[Golden Lion's Roar activates! All enemies with resistances under SS rank faints temporarily! All those that wield the Golden Lion's aura have their attack power tripled for one attack! All those following the Golden Lion have their attack

power doubled for one attack!]

In an instant, Ren's claymore shone with a brilliant light. As if to cut apart the heavens, his claymore slashed down. However, the world's enemy snorted and received the attack with his claymore. The earth tremored as if it would crumble, and Ren's body was pushed backwards. Shouldn't he be super-armored!?

“Lebuik!”

“Don't worry!”

Lebuik sped up and received Ren. Damn, he directly received an attack boosted by Frozen Roar and a unique skill. Just how much of a monster was he!? No, rather than that, if things continued, it was possible for Ren and Lebuik to lose their lives.

“Elemental Tempest!”

However, that was that and this was this. While the enemy was busy receiving Ren's claymore, I readied my area of effect attack and shot it forward. With the combined effort of Frozen Roar, Evil Eyes, and Elemental Tempest, the army had dwindled down quite a bit. The enemy only realized what I did after it pushed away Ren.

“You dare attack my subordinates like a sneaky rat!”

“If I'm a rat, you're a flea! For someone who stole the Hero's

body, you sure must have been afraid if you brought along your army!”

“Kuaaaap!”

It shot out another terrifying golden aura. This attack couldn't be dodged with ordinary movements. I used Divine Speed to move far away, then charged towards the El Patiz. I couldn't let it fight Ren! As such, there was only one thing I could do...

At that moment, Daisy messaged me. It was the perfect timing.

[Done! Children, underwater!]

[That makes it sound like you drowned them!]

In the distance, I could see Aikan's large body going underwater. The flying monsters that were fiercely attacking Aikan just a moment ago lost their target and started attacking the other undead monsters in the air.

With that, I heaved a sigh of relief. Good! The request is a success! The only thing left now is...!

When I took a step forward with such thought, a large claymore pierced through my stomach. In front of my eyes was a beastman with a golden lion's mane. I could feel his powerful energy and see his underhanded eyes.

“Kuhuhu, I aimed for when your guard was down. Weren’t you too relaxed, Hero? After all, you are our target.”

“Kuk... Damn, again. How unpleasant...!”

Seeing his clash with Ren, the only impression I got was that he was incredibly powerful, a critical error on my part. Although I was still under the effect of Divine Speed, he had caught up to me. I could see my HP falling rapidly. In the end, Diehard activated once again. This was the first time Diehard was used so often. It was the second time since I came to the world. Really, Dimensional Mercenary job sucked!

“Huhu, you can’t turn into a fly this time, can you, Hero?”

“So you knew.”

“That was a special El Patiz, you see. It can communicate with me. Know thy enemy and know yourself, and you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. Isn’t it the most basic rule?”

“So, what now?”

“Sleep. When you wake up, you will be filled with nothing but happiness.”

The El Patiz twisted its sword. At the same time, countless

number of bugs crawled out of the claymore and tried to enter my stomach. Damn, though I was somewhat expecting it, it wasn't trying to finish me here! Before the bugs could enter my body, I shouted urgently.

“Caduceus, activate!”

[Your target's level is overwhelmingly higher! The physical injuries of the target will be overwritten. The target is currently corroded by an unknown existence! Prepare for corrosion!]

Hearing the hopeless message, I smiled. Message noona really worried about me!

“With this, we, El Patiz, will come to possess two Heroes' po—”

It's happy declaration was suddenly cut short. At the same time the Hero's body fell back without strength, something inside my head stung... and the presence of the world's enemy completely disappeared.

[You defeated the world's enemy of The Panan continent! However, unless you subjugate all seeds, another enemy might appear!]

The message that popped up proved that the world's enemy had disappeared. Plus, the ball of light floating in front me was undoubtedly the power of the Hero.

In an instant, the battlefield became silent and countless number of eyes fell on me. I received them all and spoke.

“Just as planned.”

Author's note:

What happened!? Find out in the next chapter! (It will also be the end of the long Panan continent arc). Note that Panan continent's enemy was special in that they took over the residents' bodies. They're very different from the Demon Lord. If he was the opponent, plan aside, they had to run for their lives!

Chapter 197. Absolute Soul (9)

[You defeated the world's enemy of Panan continent! A truly great achievement! You received 50 bonus stat points and 10 skill points! Current skill points: 18]

[You obtained the title, 'Savior Hero'! The Lord begins to focus his support for you. You can now decrease the influence of those who ignore the dungeon's system! Whenever you fight world's enemies, your abilities increase by 10%!]

[All gods feel great interest towards you. Gods related to battles, strategies, and courage favors you greatly.]

[You obtained the entrance ticket to the SSS rank Event Dungeon, 'Wonderland.' You can go in with your guild members!]

[All skill levels increase by 1!]

[By destroying a powerful enemy, Absolute Soul became level 3! The league of your soul becomes higher, further increasing your resistance to all physical, magical, and mental attacks! The amount of mana you absorb with physical attacks and defense increases!]

[You completed the request successfully. You obtained 10 bonus stats as the reward! It is highly recommended to return immediately. This place is currently extremely dangerous!]

After happily listening to the messages flowing in, I let out a long sigh. I was able to make the best case scenario come true. Even as I readied Caduceus, I was worried that the El Patiz would avoid it somehow, but my worry was unfounded. Everything worked out perfectly.

Of course, even if things didn't work out as I intended, I was at least confident that I wouldn't have my brain eaten by the El Patiz. It was because of Absolute Soul.

When I came to the Panan continent, I thought about how to defend myself against the El Patiz. A bug that eats one's brain and takes over one's body. How cruel was that?

I wanted a skill that would protect my brain from an unexpected sneak attack. Since even the Panan continent's Hero was taken over by the El Patiz, I knew that my identity as a Hero wouldn't protect me from them. Saving my friend was important, but my life was even more important. Absolute Soul. That was the skill I tried to create that day in the forest.

But as I was synthesizing the skill, I felt something was lacking. Heavy Armor Mastery, Soul Guard, and Death Counter. They were all excellent defensive skills, and I knew the resulting skill would protect my mind and body perfectly. However, I felt that I needed something else. After all, these damned bugs had even consumed a Hero. In the end, I synthesized the skill only after I obtained Mana Absorption.

Mana Absorption's effect was simple. Whenever I attacked with a melee weapon, or whenever an enemy attacked me with a melee or magical attack, I would absorb the enemy's mana. That is, whenever I came in contact with mana, I would absorb a portion of it. As the skill level increased, the amount that I absorbed would increase. As I was always lacking in mana, it was a truly wonderful skill to have.

I focused on the fact that this skill could steal the enemy's mana. Humans generally did not have mana at birth, and even if they did, it would be an extremely low amount. Other races, however, were different. The more dissimilar they were to humans, the more mana they would possess. It wasn't wrong to say that the El Patiz were giant lumps of mana. They were afraid of the Mana Eater for the same reason. The Mana Eater's existence itself ate away at the El Patiz's life.

For that reason, I added Mana Absorption to the skill I wanted to create. The resulting skill was Absolute Soul. It raised the soul's league, allowing me to resist those of higher level. It perfectly protected my body and soul.

[Your soul is complete and pure. Such a lofty soul affects you both internally and externally. Positive effects are added to all of your actions. Your attacks become stronger, and your defense against all types of physical, magical, and mental attacks increases greatly.]

[Nothing can invade your body and mind. You become immune to all mental status effects, and you are unaffected by all corrosion, parasite, possession, control, and mutations. As

curses cannot affect you, you cannot be reborn as an undead when you die.]

[Your soul absorbs mana that nears you and prevents it from functioning properly. It is the same even when you approach the enemy. Physical attacks, and physical and magical defense absorb a fixed amount of mana.]

[Whenever the skill level increases, the skill's effect increases.]

When I first read the skill description, I almost fainted because of how good it was. Soon, I began to see the skill's potential, a potential to destroy the world's enemy of Panan continent.

I immediately began to scheme. I first had to ensure my safety, then Ren, Lebuik, and the children's safety. I had to come up with a way to make the El Patiz with the Hero's power to come into my brain.

At first, I wanted to make use of the bug acting as Uruto. I intentionally put him on Lotte's back and acted as if I was exhausted. Then, at the critical moment, I used Sky God's Play and escaped. I was surprised that there were two bugs that could take the Hero's power, but it didn't matter since I was able to destroy one of them. Once there was only one bug that could do so, the bug inside Panan continent's Hero had to face me.

My plan's chance of success had risen greatly.

After that, I freely used Sky God's Play and decimated the monsters. It was a simple psychological trick. From the beginning, I used a powerful skill to protect myself from the bug. By showing that I couldn't use that skill anymore, I let the El Patiz lower their guard. In other words, I hid the potential existence of a skill like Absolute Soul with Sky God's Play.

Even if I didn't use Sky God's Play and used something like my physical ability to defense against the first bug, the El Patiz might have been more cautious. However, I left a strong impact with Sky God's Play and showed that the ability was no longer usable. With that, they would think that I didn't have any other methods. Presumably, that was why they acted without hesitation.

Although it was rather simple, in the heat of battle, it was hard to consider something like it. Feints easily tricked people, especially a double-layered feint. As I acted proud when I used Sky God's Play and acted like I was troubled when it ended, the enemy had fallen for it even more.

Although the El Patiz didn't try to eat my brain on the spot, that was still within my expectation. It didn't matter if it did or didn't try to eat my brain. As long as it entered the range of Caduceus, that was enough.

After I obtained Absolute Soul, I thought of using the backlash from Caduceus to my benefit.

Caduceus was the scepter representing Hermes. There were two

snakes coiling around it – one that represented death or plague, and one representing healing and regeneration. Although there were other theories, the Caduceus snakes I had at least represented those meanings.

Caduceus had two abilities. First came from the black snake. As one could see from how it was used in the Luka continent, its use was offensive. When someone with a lower level or league damaged me, I could return the damage completely. If our levels were the same, the damage done would simply disappear as if it never happened. However, it had an equally great flaw. When used against an enemy stronger than me, the damage done to the enemy would be transferred to me.

As enemies stronger than me generally had higher leagues, using the black snake against them was not a good idea. On the other hand, there really wasn't a reason to use them against those weaker than me. After all, I had numerous ways of dealing with weak enemies. As such, it really only came into use that one time against Shina in the Luka continent.

This time, however, I used Caduceus' flaw to my advantage. The damage received by the enemy included the mind's corrosion by the El Patiz. Although I wasn't 100% certain, message noona confirmed it when I asked her. Even though she didn't answer me most of the time, she was quick to do so whenever I was in a Dimensional Mercenary mission.

In any case, Caduceus' power forcefully overwrote the damage done to Panan continent's Hero to myself. As I had become completely immune to corruptions, I could destroy the El Patiz the

moment it entered my brain. I was worried that it would escape, so I was perfectly prepared to use Sky God's Rage. However, everything turned out perfectly.

“Huu, kuk!”

First, I pulled out the claymore in my stomach. Then, along with the Hero's corpse, I put it inside my inventory. Blood spurted out of my stomach, and I could feel the strength leaving my body. With no other choice, I took out the Elixir Ludia gave me and drank it. I immediately recovered completely, and the gaping wound on my stomach sealed up as if it never existed. Plus, the Elixir was extremely tasty. It was sweet and refreshing, but hard to describe more in detail. I had never had something like it.

I then realized that the Elixir bottle had a very fancy design. When I was observing it with interest, someone finally spoke out.

“What... What happened!?”

“He died!”

“The Hero's power... The Hero's power was taken! I can tell! Our blessing was taken back!”

“Is there another that can hold the Hero's power?”

“No, they're all gone. We have to wait for another's birth!”

“First, kill him! Seize what belongs to us!”

It seemed they had finally come to a conclusion. The monsters, humans, and beastmen being controlled by the El Patiz all glared at me. However, I leisurely stuffed the Hero's power in the crystal bottle in my hand and sealed it. Then, I turned around and shouted.

“Ren, Lebuik! We're done here. Let's go back!”

“Ren-nim fainted!”

“Slap him awake! Return to the dungeon before they come!”

“What about you!?”

“Me?”

For destroying the world's enemy, all skill levels had increased by 1. Return was now level 9. While I put 16 skill points into it, I answered.

“I'll go back to Earth with the children.”

[You mastered Return! Up to ten times a day, you can teleport to set locations with nine other people. You can set up to ten

teleport locations, but they cannot be in other dimensions.]

Perfect. The skill effect practically doubled! I smiled and shot up to the sky. After seeing Lebuik wake Ren up and return to the dungeon, I flew to the ocean while cutting down the monsters in my path.

“Stop him! Retrieve the Hero’s power!”

“Reclaim the prosperity of El Patiz!”

“Hail El Patiz!”

How noisy. While many monsters fell to the ground as stones, many of them also only became slightly weakened as they continued to charge toward me. They really were desperate.

“You’ve stolen our hope!”

“You evil Hero!”

“I’m surprised you say that considering what you did to this world.”

“Will you be able to say that after your world lost its power!?”

“Of course. Do I look like a fool? Eat Crimson Roar, you bugs!”

At the very moment, I was undoubtedly at the center of the world! The world became dyed in crimson flames. In it, only I could breathe freely.

[Kuaaaaaang!]

[Capture him!]

[Get him before he enters the dungeon!]

[The ocean! He’s going in the ocean!]

Crimson Roar bought more time than I expected. By the time the El Patiz found a way to see through the flames, I had the ocean surface right in front of me. Now that I was here, there was no need to hesitate.

[No!]

[Noooooooo!]

“Yes!”

I dove in. With Talaria allowing me to maneuver myself freely, I went in deeper and deeper. When I looked back, the monsters,

humans, and beastmen that had thrown their bodies to stop me were spurting out blood and disintegrating. Although I was somewhat skeptical, they really were incompatible with ocean water.

I left the screams of despair behind and found the Crystal Lair deep inside the ocean. It wasn't hard to find with Aikan sitting on the ocean floor. The Crystal Lair was sitting on Aikan's back.

Daisy caught sight of me, and realizing what was inside the crystal bottle on me, she messaged me with a dumbfounded face.

[You really... did it.]

[Sorry, but don't fall for me.]

[Stupid.]

I landed on Aikan's back and entered the Crystal Lair. The children all jumped in my embrace with frowns. The rabbit-eared girl Elfa was crying as if she washed up face with tears.

“Hiing, I thought oppa was going to die.”

“Oppa, where's Ren oppa?”

“Where's the knight noona?”

“Did they die? Ren oppa died? Uwaaaaah!”

“Calm down, guys.”

I held them and calmed them down.

“They’re both alive and kicking. Though... Ren is probably a bit depressed.”

Before Ren entered the dungeon, I saw his drooped lion ears. Deific Manifestation and Ogre Power was most likely his trump card, but it had been defeated easily. Although he was powerful, his enemy wasn’t one that he could defeat with raw physical power.

That said, I was still surprised by his strength and felt great potential in him.

Although his overzealous personality would need some fixing, Ren had the talent and will to become much stronger. He also had a clear goal – to protect the children and to defeat the El Patiz controlling the Panan continent.

His will was deserving of respect, and I conveniently had an ownerless Hero’s power, which I didn’t mind giving to someone who would help me when needed. This power belonged to the Panan continent. What I was thinking of doing with it was undoubtedly the correct choice.

“And I’ll get myself a new guild member, too!”

“Expression, wicked.”

I responded to Daisy’s murmur with a smile. The crying children looked at Daisy and me curiously. I waved my hand to tell them it was nothing.

“Alright, let’s go to oppa’s home. We can meet up with Ren and Lebuik there.”

“Oppa’s home? We don’t have to be underwater?”

“Of course. We’ll be away from here for a while.”

The day you return to this continent, I hope you will be excellent warriors.

I whispered in an inaudible voice and used Return. The destination was my home on Earth. Panan continent’s Dimensional Mercenary mission had ended.

Chapter 198. Second Season (1)

Rabbit ears, dog ears, wolf ears, cat ears, bears ears. With five beastman children and two cute girls in the house, mother screamed in joy.

“Where did so many children come from!? Are they yours?”

“I’m only 21, Mom!”

“Animals ears, how cute! They feel so realistic!”

“Let me go!”

“They’re real, Mom. Don’t try to pull them out!”

After I returned, I first reported to the guild and Loretta. As I also brought Ren and Lebuik from the dungeon, the house was full. Mother happily went off to cook for the guests, while Yua went to help her.

Ren, on the other hand, sat in my room depressed. I had to stay and talk to him without being able to eat.

“Sorry, Crown Prince... When I saw the enemy that took Father’s body, I felt like my blood was flowing backwards. I should have trusted Crown Prince’s plan. I have no excuses.”

“Right, you don’t.”

“Rookie!”

“I told you before, right? A warrior has to be cool-headed. I didn’t think you’d charge at the world’s enemy with no plan.”

“That, Kang Shin has, no right. Kang Shin is far from, being cool-headed. It’s just, Kang Shin’s ability is overwhelming, so no problem.”

When I was admonishing Ren, Daisy appeared out of nowhere and refuted me. I wanted to say something, but seeing what was in Daisy’s hands, I became lost for words.

On one hand, she had a beer can, and on the other, she had a thick sausage. I remembered seeing the sausage before. After seeing that Ren and Lebuik were safe, the children sat around the living room table and ate with Mother, Yua, and Father. Before I came in my room, I remembered being surprised how adaptable they were. If I remembered correctly, the sausage was on the table. The sausage in Daisy’s hand had undoubtedly come from there.

“Kang Shin’s mother, gave me sausage. Kang Shin’s father, gave me beer.”

“Well, I’m happy you’ve gotten close to my fa... Why are you here!?”

I shouted in shock. Why was Daisy on Earth!? She then answered as if I was being dumb.

“Kang Shin used Return, with me too. Barely put Aikan, in my inventory.”

“S-Sorry...”

“I like this place. I stay still, and I get food.”

“I, I see... That’s good...”

She looked like a middle-school student, so it was somewhat strange seeing her drink beer. Though I wanted to say something to her, I held it in. I looked at Ren again and spoke.

“Ren, it’s time. The second season of thrashing phase!”

“N-No!”

“Even if you say no, your body is shaking from excitement!”

“I’m shaking because I’m terrified! Stop saying weird things!”

“What’s thrashing phase, Rookie?”

“It’s a special training I make Ren do.”

“T-Training? No, if it’s training, I’ll do it! Ren-nim is my disciple!”

“Lebuik is too soft. Plus, I feel like Lebuik will end up doing some other training, so no.”

“Kuk!”

With a face saying, ‘how did you know?’, Ren took a step back. I was just joking, but this woman... how scary. On the other hand, Ren tilted his head. With a virgin-like innocence, he asked.

“Some other training? What’s that? Lebuik is an excellent warrior. If there’s something I can learn from her, I’d like to learn it. Please, teach this foolish one.”

“R-R-R-Ren-nim. If that’s what you wish, this Lebuik will....”

Seeing Lebuik drooling and fiddling with her clothes, I flicked her forehead and shot her down. Then, I took out the crystal bottle containing the world’s power. All eyes became focused on the ball of light floating in the bottle.

“Crown Prince, could this be...?”

“Yep, it’s your world’s power.”

“H-How?”

“I’m Earth’s Hero. I can do at least this much.”

“Why didn’t you take it for yourself?”

“Don’t be absurd. This power belongs to Panan continent.”

“Crown Prince...!”

Ren sounded touched. Annoyingly, he was tearing up. I knocked on the table catch his attention and continued.

“Let me explain. I trapped the world’s power in an Elixir bottle. The bottle’s special material is preventing it from leaking out, but it won’t be last forever. The moment it’s taken out, it will probably start to assimilate itself as Earth’s power. Do you want the Panan continent’s power to be absorbed by Earth?”

“No... of course not.”

I grinned. I of course brought up the topic to prevent that from happening.

“As Earth’s Hero, I can vest this ownerless power to someone. It’s much easier and less time-consuming to transfer an ownerless power than transferring it from one human to another. But as more times passes, this power will start to weaken and it’ll get

harder for me transfer it to someone. Now, what should I do with it?”

“You’ll need to transfer it to an explorer as quickly as possible.”

“Correct. And it just so happens that there’s an excellent candidate in front of me.”

“Lebuik is here too.”

I stared at Lebuik, who sleeping on the ground with a happy expression. It made me shake my head. That said, I had to acknowledge her courage of risking her life to help Ren, and charging in in the midst of battle to stop Ren who had lost his sanity.

Although Ren still seemed oblivious, Lebuik’s actions came from her love for Ren. At some point, loyalty seemed to have become love. Regardless, to Lebuik, Ren was more important than Panan continent. On the other hand, even when all hope seemed to be lost, Ren stayed in Panan continent.

“Between Ren and Lebuik, I’m going to have to choose Ren.”

“But I’m foolish. Because of me, both Lebuik and Crown Prince suffered. When I’m watching Crown Prince, I can’t help but think why I can’t be like Crown Prince. Kuhuk!”

I flicked his forehead strongly. His head was so hard that it made

my finger hurt slightly. I held the pain in and told Ren.

“I already said what you did was foolish. But... it was understandable. Mm, well, he was your father... Kuhum. In any case, Ren is different than before, and I know Ren can get stronger. As for your rash personality, it can be fixed through another thrashing phase.”

“But I—”

“I hold Ren in high regard because Ren managed to save eight children from that hell without losing hope. Ren’s full of spirit and hungry for battle. That’s exactly what I want. That’s not something that can be taught. You have to be born with it.”

“Crown Prince...”

“I won’t take no for an answer. I won’t change my mind anyways.”

“... Can I really not avoid another thrashing phase?”

“Is that what you were worried about!?”

I gave Ren the world’s power. It was simple. I opened the bottle and shoved it in Ren’s mouth. Then, using my power as the Hero, I just had to settle and energize it. Compared to the time and effort it took for a Hero to transfer his own power to someone else, it was extremely simple.

After obtaining the Hero's power, Ren rubbed his belly and spoke.

“Uu, I feel dizzy. I can feel that this power hasn't settled in. It's nauseating almost.”

“It'll be better once you get used to it. Congratulations on becoming a Hero. Quite the pressure, huh?”

“I'll be sure to fulfill my duties.”

“Well, the kids are here now. Don't go back for a while.”

“Eh?”

Everything Ren wanted to protect was on Earth. Although I couldn't say it was safe to be on Earth, I was at least sure that it was more safe than the Panan continent, which was dominated by the El Patiz.

“There's nothing Ren can do alone anyways. If you die and have the world's power stolen again, that would be disastrous. They said so themselves. That they needed time before an El Patiz that can contain the Hero's power was born. In other words, one would eventually come to being. I'm not sure how they can reproduce without the world's power, but that's what they said. Maybe they'll fuse or evolve or something.”

“R-Right...”

“Going back alone is simply stupid. Or what, did you plan on hiding in the ocean? Who knows if they can still reproduce?”

“That’s... true.”

“So Ren, help me.”

I said bluntly.

“I’ll deal with the danger Earth is facing in 2 years. After that, I want to save other worlds. Ludia’s Luka continent, Daisy’s Sylon continent, and yours, the Panan continent. All of them.”

“Do you know what you’re saying, Crown Prince?”

“Of course. You weren’t thinking of hiding for the rest of your life, were you? Then there would be no meaning to having the Hero’s power.”

Ren’s face was dyed red. He shot up and shouted.

“Impossible! Do you know how many worlds were ruined and how many worlds are being ruined!? If you did, you wouldn’t say something like that!”

“If strong explorers come together, I’m sure it’s possible. People like you, Daisy, and me. So help me, Ren. Help protect Earth. I’ll help you too.”

I spoke calmly as I stared into his eyes. There was no room for joking. I wanted Ren to reply with seriousness.

At that moment, Ren’s expression became strange.

“Crown Prince. Your... Your guild...”

“Didn’t I tell you? Revival. It means rebirth.”

“Rebirth...”

Ren fell. Seeing the hint of flames that began to burn in his eyes, I smiled.

“I’ll... try. After all, I owe Crown Prince a debt.”

“Good. Welcome to Revival, Ren.”

Ren joined my guild. I was somewhat curious how Lebuik would react, but I decided not to pursue the thought. When Ren and I shook our hands, Daisy, who was watching from the side, slammed her emptied beer can down.

“Long, arduous journey. But, I’m looking forward to it.”

“I’ll be sure to save Sylon continent too. Then, you’ll become its Hero. Get ready to feel the pressure.”

“Hmph, I welcome it anytime.”

With that, she left the room. Perhaps she just wanted to hear Ren and my conversation. Or perhaps, she wanted to confirm my resolve. I got up. Ren also followed me up and asked.

“U-Um... Is the thrashing phase starting now?”

“No.”

I said bluntly.

“Let me climb the dungeon first!”

Author’s note:

The arc title isn’t really that meaningful. I represents the beginning of a new story with business in other dimensions being over with for now, and it also represents Shin being able to climb the dungeon again... oh, and also Ren’s thrashing phase being resumed. Oops, the last one ended up being emphasized!

Chapter 199. Second Season (2)

Of course, I didn't just march straight into the dungeon. I had to see the guild members, and more importantly, I had to hold a funeral for Ren's father, whose corpse was in my inventory. Daisy drooled after hearing that I had a Hero's corpse, but there was no way I could let her use a friend's father as an undead. However, I still promised her that I'd get her a similar corpse one day.

“Previous Hero... Strong, warrior...”

Even as we cremated Ren's father, Daisy murmured with regret. It was slightly scary.

As Lebuik and the children had to be at the funeral, it couldn't be held at the dungeon's Residential Area or the resort area. In the end, we gathered others who wanted to come and held the funeral at a nearby mountain. As it would be hard to explain if an ordinary person saw us, I had Hwaya cast magic to prevent people from approaching the mountain. Naturally, Hwaya became the first to hear about what happened.

“I didn't think you'd defeat a world's enemy.”

“The conditions were favorable. That's it.”

Hwaya lightly smiled.

“I'm extremely curious. Who knows, maybe it'll help us deal

with the danger Earth is facing. Tell me about it in detail when we're alone later. Along with a drink, of course."

"It wasn't anything special... but sure."

Although only people unrelated to Panan continent didn't have to come, all of Revival's members attended the funeral. It was partly to meet Ren, who was the newest member. When the female members saw the little children, they were all extremely elated.

"Look at those rabbit ears."

"She's shaking. I want to hug her..."

"So cute!"

Of course, with their overwhelming affection, the children got scared and hid behind Ren, Lebuik, and me. Though there was a little accident where Ina who came running toward me almost froze Elfa accidentally, everything else went smoothly. Ren could send his father off, which I was sure would serve as a good way to affirm his resolve.

Going back to Ina, as she was about the same age as the children from the Panan continent, she had a little conflict with them.

"Daddy, who are they? Daddy's Ina's!"

“Daddy isn’t Ina’s. Also, they’re friends from the Panan continent.”

“Daddy? Shin oppa is a daddy?”

“That’s a lie!”

“It has to be a lie! They don’t have the same hair color!”

Hearing how Ina called me Daddy, Elfa perked up her rabbit ears and asked, while the other children stared at Ina and me surprised. Ina puffed her cheeks and put her arms around mu neck.

“Ina is Daddy’s daughter!”

“Y-Yeah... Ina is my daughter.”

It felt a bit weird saying it, but there was no other choice. I didn’t want to provoke Ina’s trauma. I patted Ina, who was stuck to me like a Koala, and announced to the others that I was her father. Seeing the surprised children jumping up and down while flapping their ears, I wanted to die.

After that, the funeral ended. I did catch Daisy trying to put her hands on the ashes, but we managed to clean everything up. After that, the problem was where Ren and the children would stay. As they couldn’t all live in my house, we decided to simply buy a house near ours.

When Lebuik realized that Ren and the eight children would live by themselves in a house, she came up to me with a look of determination.

“I want to enter your guild.”

“You want to live with Ren?”

“Huk!”

“It’s written all over your face!”

Although her motives were impure, it wasn’t a bad idea to have a woman in the house, especially with Ren being insensitive about certain things. Like they say, the more the merrier. Furthermore, she was a skilled First Dungeon explorer on the 69th floor. After a bit of talking, Lebuik left the Demonic Girls guild and joined mine.

Only after that did I feel like everything was taken care of. I had to spoil Ludia and Ina as I hadn’t seen them for a while, but that was it.

“So, you came to climb the dungeon right away?”

“Yes.”

After listening to my short reply, Loretta made a serious

expression. Then, she said something that really didn't match her expression.

“First, congratulations on defeating the world's enemy of Panan continent. That is truly a great achievement. It's not something you can disclose carelessly, but at least the dungeon's administrators all know about it. Especially the ol... Lord.”

“Thanks. So... when will you let go of me?”

At my question, Loretta strengthened her grip on my wrists and continued.

“But Shin-nim, you have to be careful. Not all world's enemies are the same. Don't think that Earth's problems can be solved as easily as the Panan continent's.”

“I know. I'll stay with Loretta for an hour before I go. Happy?”

It was a complete non-sequitur, but it seemed to have been the correct answer. Loretta immediately let go of my wrists and smiled brightly. She dragged me along to a table, sat down, and tapped on the seat next to her.

“Then sit here and tell everything that happened!”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“Ehehe, hurry!”

From then, I had to wait 3 hours before I could go up to the 59th floor. Since I ended up getting the Queen Elf’s Blessing, I wasn’t particularly unsatisfied. Of course, I didn’t do any other strange things. Yup.

After breaking through the 59th floor, which only had an increased number of golems, in 2 hours, I immediately entered Beyond’s 9th floor. Each floor of Beyond was bigger than the previous. Without Mana Detection, it was practically impossible to advance onward. Of course, Mana Detection was something one naturally learned the first time one entered Beyond.

“Kugyaaaaa!”

“Human, see the power of Lizard Knight!”

“Yeah, I’m happy to see you guys too.”

After fighting annoying enemies like the Mana Eater and El Patiz, seeing Dark Ratmen and Lizard Knights gave me a sense of comfort. Feeling such things in Beyond, I felt depressed like I’d taken the wrong road somewhere. Now, even if two hundred Orc Lords appeared at the same time, I felt like I could deal with them without a change in my facial expression.

[You cleared Beyond’s 1st floor. You obtained the qualification

to challenge the dungeon's 60th floor.]

[Your maximum HP and MP increase by 2%. You obtained 5 bonus stats.]

[Experience has been added to skills you frequently used to progress through Beyond's 9th floor.]

[High-rank Provoke became level 7! Your existence itself is a provocation. Perhaps, even lifeless objects might get angry and attack you.]

[Wind King's Rage became level 3! Damage increase per monster increases to 15%, and the maximum amplification increases to 200%.]

“Hu...”

After decimating hundreds of Dark Ratmen and Lizard Knight with Crimson Roar, I let out a satisfied sigh and checked the message window. It was now time for the 60th floor. After I defeat the Floor Master, Ren's thrashing phase would begin. Thinking about how much Ren will grow, a smile bloomed on my face.

At that moment, someone sent me a message. Though I flinched, thinking Ren somehow found out what I was thinking and messaged me about it, it wasn't Ren. The message was from someone I couldn't remember when I had added him to my friend

list.

[Oi, the armor's finished.]

[I'll come right away!]

The moment I saw Lin's message, I left Beyond through the gate and rushed to the Residential Area. I felt like someone was off while I was breaking through the 59th floor and Beyond's 9th floor. I didn't have my armor! I was wondering why it hurt so much when I got hit!

When I arrived at Fairy Garden, instead of going to Loretta's cabin like I usually did, I asked around and headed to Lin's workshop. As expected of a vice-guild master's workshop, although it looked like it ruined Fairy Garden's natural beauty, no one paid any attention to it.

In Fairy Garden, where everything looked natural, Lin's workshop was the lone modern building that ruined the environment. A chimney that spewed out black smoke and extreme heat that could be felt all around the building, only after seeing Lin's workshop did I picture Lin as a blacksmith.

“Oh, you came here quickly.”

Lin greeted me with a loose well-ventilating clothing and a cigarette in his mouth. Next to him was a new armor in a bracelet-form like the Crimson Dragon Scale Armor. Interestingly, this one

was jet-black.

“It’s made out of the materials you brought me. Just because I’m a descendant of a red dragon, it doesn’t mean everything I make has to be red.”

“Ah, that makes sense... Well, thanks, Lin. You did all this for me.”

“It’s not for you. It’s for noonim, tsk.”

Lin flicked away the cigarette ashes and murmured curses. However, he seemed to be making a satisfactory smile.

“Do you like Loretta?”

“Shut up and take the armor. Thanks to my outstanding skills, it turned out better than what’s possible from the materials.”

Did I hit the mark? But he plays around with other women too freely for that to be true... Maybe, it’s something like respect and admiration rather than passion. Though Fairy Garden’s inner workings seemed to be complicated, since it wasn’t any of my business, I just took the black bracelet and examined it.

[Pure Black Desire (Legend)]

Durability – Indestructible

Defense – 7,500

Equipment Requirement – Kang Shin

Option – All stats +30. Decreases damage taken from all basic attacks by 50%. Decreases damage taken from all attack skills from 30%. Chance of receiving a critical hit increases by 50%, but chance of dealing a critical hit increases by 200%. When using a charge type attack, 'Desire Thorn' activates. When using any attack skills, 'Sacrifice' can be used. When HP falls below 10%, 'Devourer' activates once per day.

Desire Thorn – Can be activated once per day while using a charge type attack. Countless number of thorns shoots out from the armor, absorbing the HP from enemies hit by the thorns. The amount of HP absorbed is half the damage dealt. As such, the targets will end up receiving 50% more damage.

Sacrifice – Usable with any attack skill. Receives half of the skill's damage, but doubles the skill's effect. The damage received by Sacrifice cannot drop your HP under 10%.

Devourer – After choosing a target, all attacks done absorbs a portion of the target's HP to recover your own. However, overabsorbing the target's HP may cause mutations to your body. This change can be purified by highest-grade holy magic or Elixir.]

“Legend!?”

“What, I upgraded your cape to Legend too. Do you not want it?”

“I want it! Give it to me now!”

Two Legend-grade equipment! I feel like I can conquer the dungeon’s 100th floor right now!

Chapter 200. Second Season (3)

[Felixes Lava Cape (Legend)]

Durability – 500/500 (Auto-repair)

Defense – 2,000

Equipment Requirement – Kang Shin

Option – Dexterity +40, Magic +40, Charm +40. Immune to sneak attacks. Flame Sucker is always active.

Flame Sucker – Absorbs all flames up to SSS rank and converts them to magic and constitution. Flames above SSS rank can be nullified, but EX rank flames cannot.]

Although I had many questions, I asked the most important one first.

“What’s an EX rank flame, Lin?”

“Imagine the flame breath of a 10,000 year old high dragon that’s prepared to burn its throat, That’s EX rank. Or, imagine the Demon Lord from the Luka continent sacrificing his arm to make a flame. That would be EX rank. It’s hard for the dungeon to

estimate anything above that. Just think of them all as EX rank.”

“So it’s an ultimate flame that can even injure the user. I wouldn’t be surprised if the Demon Lord will bear the risk to use something like that, so I guess I’ll be in trouble if I think I can block all flames...”

“Good, now you’re thinking.”

Lin nodded with satisfaction. Then, he shoved his face toward me and continued.

“Kang Shin, be careful with that armor. I’m the one who made it, but it’s too overbearing. I managed to make use of its aggressive nature to greatly increase the chance of landing critical hits, but its aggressive nature also increases the wearer’s chance of receiving critical hits by a whole 50%. It’s going to be quite troublesome. You have to be especially wary of Devourer’s side effect.”

“The mutation, you mean?”

“Yeah, that. I’ve seen many people who have made fun of it, but only ended up being done in by it. What I’m trying to say is, don’t use Devourer so freely. Got it? If you mutate due to the Demon Lord factor... Damn, noonim’s going to end me.”

Lin glared at the black bracelet on my wrist with a look that seemed to say, ‘should I take it back?’ I nodded seriously and retorted.

“I’m immune to mutations so it’s okay.”

“Right, since you’re immune to mutations, you should try not to use... Immune to mutations!?”

“Right. Isn’t being immune to mutations the basic requirement of all explorers? Are there explorers not immune to mutations? That can’t be, right?”

“Ku, kuuu... I want to... hit you...!”

I thanked Lin again and left Fairy Garden. For some reason, Lin’s expression wasn’t so happy when I thanked him!

Mm, being able to tease Lin was very satisfying. Today was turning out to be great!

[Name: Kang Shin Race: Human Sex: Male

Class: Elementalist (Sub – Skill Mixer, Tamer) Title: Savior
Hero Rank: Gold 7

Level: 60

HP – 55,860/55,860 MP – 60,960/60,960

Strength – 275(+124) Dexterity – 250(+127) Constitution – 250(+79)

Intelligence – 40(+82) Magic – 320(+157) Charm – 87(+147) Luck – 39(+72)

Normal Skills – High-rank Martial Arts (Lv 7), Peruta – Mad Typhoon (Lv 2), High-rank Crossbow Marksmanship (Lv 1), Wing King's Rage (Lv 3), High-rank Heroic Strike (Lv 3), High-rank Provoke (Lv 7), Divine Speed (Master), Return (Master), Peruta Circuit (Lv 9), Dimensional Travel (Lv 5), Overwhelm (Lv 3), Absolute Soul (Lv 3), Deific Manifestation, Riding

Class Skills – High-rank Spirit Mastery (Lv 4), High-rank Spirit Aura (Lv 3), High-rank Elemental Control (Lv 3), High-rank Elemental Contract (Lv 3), Lightning Spear Storm (Lv 2), Mid-rank Elemental Blade (Lv 9), Mid-rank Elemental Tempest (Lv 9)

Subclass Skill – Endow Skill, Taming (Lv 4), Spirit of the Collector, Spirit of the Mixer, Spirit of the Tamer (Lv 4)]

Before I challenged the dungeon's 60th floor, I checked my status to celebrate getting new equipment. At the same time, I used up all the bonus stats I hadn't had the time to use. I had become Gold Rank 7 before I noticed, and a few stats had grown unbelievably high. Strength, dexterity, and constitution stats didn't need much explaining. As for intelligence, while the base stat was only 40, I

was getting 82, almost double the base amount, as bonus. Even my luck stat had reached an absurd 111 points.

As for magic, which was my highest stat, I didn't even know what to say. Unlike the other stats that were extremely difficult, if not impossible, to grow naturally, it was constantly improving along with Peruta Circuit's usage.

In terms of stats, I was most likely one of the highest in the dungeon. Though the two additional Legend-grade equipment heavily increased my bonus stats, I've gotten rather aloof about stat increases.

Of course, I could still feel myself getting stronger every time my stats increased, but with so many explosive increases in a short period of time, my body hadn't adapted to the change and was pretty much always in the process of updating. With all the stats I've gained from Event Dungeons, Event Raids, Beyond, and other sources, it was if I'd broken through the dungeon's 100th floor. That was even including all the stats one could gain by grinding Floor Masters!

However, to be so overconfident in my stats, there were too many things I learned from the Panan continent. Traps, special attack methods, power of one's levels, and even the level-ignoring difference in one's league of existence; knowing all these, it was impossible to be happy with an increase of 10 or 20 stat points. Rather, I realized that I needed to focus on honing my skills, which were in a unique and independent position.

In that sense, having all skills increase by a level for defeating a

world's enemy was an outstanding benefit. Though, there were skills that had to be 'updated', like stats.

“That means Beyond is just that important.”

Not only did clearing a Beyond's floor raise my HP and MP, but it also added experience to the skills I used to clear that floor. Beyond would undoubtedly help me hone my abilities. To defeat the Demon Lord I met in the Luka continent, the current me was still lacking. Plus, I had to think about the other world's enemy that had yet to make its appearance. I couldn't be content with just this. I had to get much stronger.

Though not even a month had passed since Loretta's announcement of a 2 year time limit, I felt anxious. Perhaps it was because so many things had happened in the past month. Regardless, I couldn't do much about this feeling of anxiety. Knowing you might die in 2 years and cause the entire world to fall to ruin, it was impossible to be completely unaffected. The important thing was knowing what to do about it.

To deal with this anxiousness, I decided to tackle the 60th floor. After all, when things seemed complicated or when I just wanted to sweat off the stress of everyday life, climbing the dungeon was the best thing to do!

... Though something felt off, I decided not to pay any attention to it.

Just like before, I equipped the armor by imbuing mana into the

bracelet. Unlike the Crimson Scale Armor, which had hints of black on a red base, the Pure Black Desire was a pure black full plate armor just like its name suggested. That said, across the black armor were strange engravings, which looked sophisticated and seemed to give off magic power.

These engravings maintained a black glow and grabbed my attention. It was a rather ominous glow that seemed to suck me into a trance when I looked at it. Overall, it was a cool armor that provoked the desires of puberty hidden within me!

With the help of the new armor, I broke through the 60th floor in just 3 hours and found myself in front of the Floor Master room. Next to me was Lotte in her human-form. In the past, she couldn't fully spread her wings out in the dungeon's narrow passageways. Now that she could take the human form, she was an excellent damage dealer with both speed and power. As she was treated as my tamed beast, it still counted as a solo clear when I brought her along.

“Whew. Considering how the number of golems increased as I climbed last few floors, the Floor Master is probably a golem too...”

“Golems are annoying because my claws don't penetrate them well. Regardless, let's finish this quickly and go rest, Hero.”

Lotte, you easily break them with aura-imbued attacks or flame breath. Don't lie...

However, since the dungeon liked to play tricks on explorers, it

was entirely possible for the Floor Master to be a mimic. I tightened my grip on Chaotic Spear and kicked the door open.

“Fight me!”

[Guooooooooooooooooo!]

A loud, strange roar greeted us. The ceiling was unusually high, and an enormous steel giant was looking down at us. It had the exact appearance of a 12 meter tall human covered in steel. I trembled excitedly at the overwhelming sense of existence I hadn't met in a long time.

“Lotte, you can fly here!”

“I've been waiting for those words, Hero!”

Lotte immediately transformed to her wyvern form. I jumped onto her back and raised my spear. It was the perfect chance to test one of my new armor's abilities. Desire Thorn and Devourer were both straight-forward. However, Sacrifice seemed to have a somewhat ambiguous clause.

[Sacrifice – Usable with any attack skill. Receive half the damage of the skill, but doubles the skill's effect. The damage received by Sacrifice cannot reduce your HP to under 10%.]

Just like its name suggested, Sacrifice traded one's flesh for the enemy's bones. Although the skill wouldn't kill me, it could potentially put me on the verge of death. I had to be careful before I used it.

The ambiguous part was receiving half of the skill's damage. Did it double the skill's effect after I received half the damage? Or did I receive half the damage from the doubled skill effect? In other words, given that the skill's damage was 100 and the amplified damage was 200, I didn't know whether I took 50 or 100 damage. That was what this fight was for. Once I tried it, I would get a feeling for it.

I immediately readied Sacrifice and aimed my spear toward the enemy.

[Kuaaaang!]

The giant golem raised its fists and sent a jab toward me. This guy, he knew boxing! Though Lotte seemed surprised by its quick jab, she flew backwards swiftly and dodged it. Meanwhile, I slowly gathered energy in my spear. Sacrifice wasn't a skill that could be used only once per day. As such, there was no need to save the skill for anything. There was nothing wrong with being a bit bold and using it now.

“Elemental Blade!”

In an instant, the spear blade elongated by over 10 meters. Immediately after using Sacrifice, I made Lotte accelerate and

thrust my spear toward the giant golem's left shoulder joint.

[Critical Hit!]

[Kuaaaaaang!]

“Kuhuk, that hurts!”

That hurt enough to make me scream! Immediately after cutting off the golem's arm, I checked my HP after feeling the electrifying pain. Shockingly, my HP had decreased by 35%. I really couldn't use this skill freely! I grit my teeth and gulped down a potion. At that moment, Lotte called me.

[Hero.]

“Yeah? What's wrong?”

[That guy seems to be a weakling.]

“... What?”

I confusedly turned around. The golem that had lost its arm was roaring and charging toward me. Indeed, it did look quite pitiful. Wait, Elemental Blade was powerful, but still, it instantly cut off its arm?

“The 50% damage I took...”

Did it hurt so much because I got a critical hit? But even critical hits only doubled the damage. That meant that the Elemental Blade with Sacrifice had dealt 4 times the normal damage. Mm, I couldn't quite understand how it worked. Maybe if it had bones and was affected by the Skull Breaker effect... Ah!

[I'll kill you, Humaaaaaaaaaaaaan!]

So that guy has bones!?